

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

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THE WOMAN IN WHITE.

PART THE SECOND. HARTRIGHT'S NARRATIVE.

X.

THE Inquest was hurried for certain local reasons which weighed with the coroner and the town authorities. It was held on the afternoon of the next day. I was, necessarily, one among the witnesses.

My first proceeding, in the morning, was to go to the post-office, and inquire for the letter which I expected from Marian. No change of circumstances, however extraordinary, could affect the one great anxiety which weighed on my mind while I was away from London. The morning's letter, which was my only assurance that no misfortune had happened, was still the absorbing interest with which my day began.

To my relief, the letter from Marian was at the office waiting for me. Nothing had happened—they were both as safe and as well as when I had left them. Laura sent her love, and begged that I would let her know of my return, a day beforehand. Her sister added, in explanation of this message, that she had saved "nearly a sovereign" out of her own private purse, and that she had claimed the privilege of ordering the dinner and giving the dinner which was to celebrate the day of my return. I read these little domestic confidences, in the bright morning, with the terrible recollection of what had happened the evening before, vivid in my memory. The necessity of sparing Laura any sudden knowledge of the truth was the first consideration which the letter suggested to me. I wrote at once to Marian, to tell her what I have told in these pages; presenting the tidings as gradually and gently as I could, and warning her not to let any such thing as a newspaper fall in Laura's way while I was absent. In the case of any other woman, less courageous and less reliable, I might have hesitated before I ventured on unreservedly disclosing the whole truth. But I owed it to Marian to be faithful to my past experience of her, and to trust her as I trusted myself.

My letter was necessarily long. It occupied me until the time for going to the Inquest.

The objects of the legal inquiry were necessarily beset by peculiar complications and difficulties. Besides the investigation into the manner in which the deceased had met his death,

there were serious questions to be settled relating to the cause of the fire, to the abstraction of the keys, and to the presence of a stranger in the vestry at the time when the flames broke out. Even the identification of the dead man had not yet been accomplished. The helpless condition of the servant had made the police distrustful of his asserted recognition of his master. They had sent to Knowlesbury over-night to secure the attendance of witnesses who were well acquainted with the person of Sir Percival Glyde, and they had communicated, the first thing in the morning, with Blackwater Park. These precautions enabled the coroner and jury to settle the question of identity, and to confirm the correctness of the servant's assertion; the evidence offered by competent witnesses, and by the discovery of certain facts, being strengthened by the dead man's watch. The crest and the name of Sir Percival Glyde were engraved inside it.

The next inquiries related to the fire.

The servant and I, and the boy who had heard the light struck in the vestry, were the first witnesses called. The boy gave his evidence clearly enough; but the servant's mind had not yet recovered the shock inflicted on it—he was plainly incapable of assisting the objects of the inquiry, and he was desired to stand down. To my own relief, my examination was not a long one. I had not known the deceased; I had never seen him; I was not aware of his presence at Old Welmingham; and I had not been in the vestry at the finding of the body. All I could prove was that I had stopped at the clerk's cottage to ask my way; that I had heard from him of the loss of the keys; that I had accompanied him to the church to render what help I could; that I had seen the fire; that I had heard some person unknown, inside the vestry, trying vainly to unlock the door; and that I had done what I could, from motives of humanity, to save the man. Other witnesses, who had been acquainted with the deceased, were asked if they could explain the mystery of his presumed abstraction of the keys, and his presence in the burning room. But the coroner seemed to take it for granted, naturally enough, that I, as a total stranger in the neighbourhood, and a total stranger to Sir Percival Glyde, could not be in a position to offer any evidence on these two points.

The course that I was myself bound to take, when my formal examination had closed, seemed

clear to me. I did not feel called on to volunteer any statement of my own private convictions, in the first place, because my doing so could serve no practical purpose, now that all proof in support of any surmises of mine was burnt with the burnt register; in the second place, because I could not have intelligibly stated my opinion—my unsupported opinion—without disclosing the whole story of the conspiracy; and producing the same unsatisfactory effect on the minds of the coroner and the jury which I had already produced on the mind of Mr. Kyle.

In these pages, however, and after the time that has now elapsed, no such cautions and restraints as are here described, need fetter the free expression of my opinion. I will state, before my pen occupies itself with other events, how my own convictions lead me to account for the abstraction of the keys, for the outbreak of the fire, and for the death of the man.

The news of my being unexpectedly free on bail, drove Sir Percival, as I believe, to his last resources. The attempted attack on the road was one of those resources; and the suppression of all practical proof of his crime, by destroying the page of the register on which the forgery had been committed, was the other, and the surest of the two. If I could produce no extract from the original book, to compare with the certified copy at Knowlesbury, I could produce no positive evidence, and could threaten him with no fatal exposure. All that was necessary to his end was, that he should get into the vestry unperceived, that he should tear out the page in the register, and that he should leave the vestry again as privately as he had entered it.

On this supposition, it is easy to understand why he waited until nightfall before he made the attempt, and why he took advantage of the clerk's absence to possess himself of the keys. Necessity would oblige him to strike a light to find his way to the right register; and common caution would suggest his locking the door on the inside, in case of intrusion on the part of any inquisitive stranger, or on my part, if I happened to be in the neighbourhood at the time.

I cannot believe that it was any part of his intention to make the destruction of the register appear to be the result of accident, by purposely setting the vestry on fire. The bare chance that prompt assistance might arrive, and that the books might, by the remotest possibility, be saved, would have been enough, on a moment's consideration, to dismiss any idea of this sort from his mind. Remembering the quantity of combustible objects in the vestry—the straw, the papers, the packing-cases, the dry wood, the old wormeaten presses—all the probabilities, in my estimation, point to the fire as the result of an accident with his matches or his light.

His first impulse, under these circumstances, was doubtless to try to extinguish the flames—and, failing in that, his second impulse (ignorant as he was of the state of the lock) had been to attempt to escape by the door which had given him entrance. When I had called to him, the flames must have extended across the door

leading into the church, on either side of which the presses extended, and close to which the other combustible objects were placed. In all probability, the smoke and flame (confined as they were to the room) had been too much for him, when he tried to escape by the inner door. He must have dropped in his death-swoon—he must have sunk in the place where he was found—just as I got on the roof to break the skylight-window. Even if we had been able, afterwards, to get into the church, and to burst open the door from that side, the delay must have been fatal. He would have been past saving, long past saving, by that time. We should only have given the flames free ingress into the church: the church, which was now preserved, but which, in that event, would have shared the fate of the vestry. There is no doubt in my mind—there can be no doubt in the mind of any one—that he was a dead man before ever we got to the empty cottage, and worked with might and main to tear down the beam.

This is the nearest approach that any theory of mine can make towards accounting for a result which was visible matter of fact. As I have described them, so events passed to us outside. As I have related it, so his body was found.

The Inquest was adjourned over one day; no explanation that the eye of the law could recognise having been discovered, thus far, to account for the mysterious circumstances of the case.

It was arranged that more witnesses should be summoned, and that the London solicitor of the deceased should be invited to attend. A medical man was also charged with the duty of reporting on the mental condition of the servant, which appeared at present to debar him from giving any evidence of the least importance. He could only declare, in a dazed way, that he had been ordered, on the night of the fire, to wait in the lane, and that he knew nothing else, except that the deceased was certainly his master. My own impression was, that he had been first used (without any guilty knowledge on his own part) to ascertain the fact of the clerk's absence from home on the previous day; and that he had been afterwards ordered to wait near the church (but out of sight of the vestry) to assist his master, in the event of my escaping the attack on the road, and of a collision occurring between Sir Percival and myself. It is necessary to add, that the man's own testimony was never obtained to confirm this view. The medical report of him declared that what little mental faculty he possessed was seriously shaken; nothing satisfactory was extracted from him at the adjourned Inquest; and, for aught I know to the contrary, he may never have recovered to this day.

I returned to the hotel at Welmingham, so jaded in body and mind, so weakened and depressed by all that I had gone through, as to be quite unfit to endure the local gossip about the Inquest, and to answer the trivial questions that the talkers addressed to me in the coffee-room. I withdrew from my scanty dinner to my cheap garret-chamber, to secure myself a little quiet,

and to think, undisturbed, of Laura and Marian.

If I had been a richer man, I would have gone back to London, and would have comforted myself with a sight of the two dear faces again, that night. But, I was bound to appear, if called on, at the adjourned Inquest, and doubly bound to answer my bail before the magistrate at Knowlesbury. Our slender resources had suffered already; and the doubtful future—more doubtful than ever now—made me dread decreasing our means, by allowing myself an indulgence, even at the small cost of a double railway journey, in the carriages of the second class.

The next day—the day immediately following the Inquest—was left at my own disposal. I began the morning by again applying at the post-office for my regular report from Marian. It was waiting for me, as before, and it was written, throughout, in good spirits. I read the letter thankfully; and then set forth, with my mind at ease for the day, to walk to Old Welmingham, and to view the scene of the fire by the morning light.

Truly has the great poet said, "There is nothing serious in mortality." Through all the ways of our unintelligible world, the trivial and the terrible walk hand in hand together. The irony of circumstances holds no mortal catastrophe in respect. When I reached the church, the trampled condition of the burial-ground was the only serious trace left of the fire and the death. A rough hoarding of boards had been knocked up before the vestry doorway. Rude caricatures were scrawled on it already; and the village children were fighting and shouting for the possession of the best peep-hole to see through. On the spot where I had heard the cry for help from the burning room, on the spot where the panic-stricken servant had dropped on his knees, a fussy flock of poultry was now scrambling for the first choice of worms after the rain—and on the ground at my feet, where the door and its dreadful burden had been laid, a workman's dinner was waiting for him, tied up in a yellow basin, and his faithful cur in charge was yelping at me for coming near the food. The old clerk, looking idly at the slow commencement of the repairs, had only one interest that he could talk about, now—the interest of escaping all blame, for his own part, on account of the accident that had happened. One of the village women, whose white, wild face I remembered, the picture of terror, when we pulled down the beam, was giggling with another woman, the picture of inanity, over an old washing-tub. Nothing serious in mortality! Solomon in all his glory, was Solomon with the elements of the contemptible lurking in every fold of his robes and in every corner of his palace.

As I left the place, my thoughts turned, not for the first time, to the complete overthrow that all present hope of establishing Laura's identity had now suffered through Sir Percival's death. If he had lived—well! if he had, would that total change of circumstances really have altered the result? Could I have made my discovery

a marketable commodity, even for Laura's sake, after I had found out that robbery of the rights of others was the essence of Sir Percival's crime? Could I have offered the price of my silence for his confession of the conspiracy, when the effect of that silence must have been to keep the right heir from the estates, and the right owner from the name? Impossible! If Sir Percival had lived, the discovery, from which (in my ignorance of the true nature of the Secret) I had hoped so much, could not have been mine to suppress, or to make public, as I thought best, for the vindication of Laura's rights. In common honesty and common honour, I must have gone at once to the stranger whose birthright had been usurped—I must have renounced the victory at the moment when it was mine, by placing my discovery unreservedly in that stranger's hands—and I must have faced afresh all the difficulties which stood between me and the one object of my life, exactly as I was resolved, in my heart of hearts, to face them now!

I returned to Welmingham with my mind composed; feeling more sure of myself and my resolution than I had felt yet.

On my way to the hotel, I passed the end of the square in which Mrs. Catherick lived. Should I go back to the house, and make another attempt to see her? No. That news of Sir Percival's death, which was the last news she ever expected to hear, must have reached her, hours since. All the proceedings at the Inquest had been reported in the local paper that morning: there was nothing I could tell her which she did not know already. My interest in making her speak had slackened. I remembered the furtive hatred in her face, when she said, "There is no news of Sir Percival that I don't expect—except the news of his death." I remembered the stealthy interest in her eyes when they settled on me at parting, after she had spoken those words. Some instinct, deep in my heart, which I felt to be a true one, made the prospect of again entering her presence repulsive to me—I turned away from the square, and went straight back to the hotel.

Some hours later, while I was resting in the coffee-room, a letter was placed in my hands by the waiter. It was addressed to me, by name; and I found, on inquiry, that it had been left at the bar by a woman, just as it was near dusk, and just before the gas was lighted. She had said nothing; and she had gone away again before there was time to speak to her, or even to notice who she was.

I opened the letter. It was neither dated, nor signed; and the handwriting was palpably disguised. Before I had read the first sentence, however, I knew who my correspondent was. Mrs. Catherick.

The letter ran as follows—I copy it exactly, word for word:

"Sir, you have not come back, as you said you would. No matter; I know the news, and I write to tell you so. Did you see anything particular in my face when you left me? I was

wondering whether the day of his downfall had come at last, and whether you were the chosen instrument for working it. You were—and you *have* worked it. You were weak enough, as I have heard, to try and save his life. If you had succeeded, I should have looked upon you as my enemy. Now you have failed, I hold you as my friend. Your inquiries frightened him into the vestry by night; your inquiries, without your privity, and against your will, have served the hatred and wreaked the vengeance of three-and-twenty years. Thank you, sir, in spite of yourself.

"I owe something to the man who has done this. How can I pay my debt? If I was a young woman still, I might say, 'Come! put your arm round my waist, and kiss me, if you like.' I should have been fond enough of you, even to go that length; and you would have accepted my invitation—you would, sir, twenty years ago! But I am an old woman, now. Well! I can satisfy your curiosity, and pay my debt in that way. You *had* a great curiosity to know certain private affairs of mine, when you came to see me—private affairs which all your sharpness could not look into without my help—private affairs which you have not discovered, even now. You *shall* discover them; your curiosity shall be satisfied. I will take any trouble to please you, my estimable young friend!

"You were a little boy, I suppose, in the year twenty-seven? I was a handsome young woman, at that time, living at Old Welmingham. I had a contemptible fool for a husband. I had also the honour of being acquainted (never mind how) with a certain gentleman (never mind whom). I shall not call him by his name. Why should I? It was not his own. He never had a name: you know that, by this time, as well as I do.

"It will be more to the purpose to tell you how he worked himself into my good graces. I was born with the tastes of a lady; and he gratified them. In other words, he admired me, and he made me presents. No woman can resist admiration and presents—especially presents, provided they happen to be just the things she wants. He was sharp enough to know that—most men are. Naturally, he wanted something, in return—all men do. And what do you think was the something? The merest trifle. Nothing but the key of the vestry, and the key of the press inside it, when my husband's back was turned. Of course he lied when I asked him why he wished me to get him the keys, in that private way. He might have saved himself the trouble—I didn't believe him. But I liked my presents, and I wanted more. So I got him the keys, without my husband's knowledge. I watched him, without his own knowledge. Once, twice, four times, I watched him—and the fourth time I found him out.

"I was never over-scrupulous where other people's affairs were concerned; and I was not over-scrupulous about his adding one to the marriages in the register, on his own account. Of course, I knew it was wrong; but it did no harm to *me*—which was one good reason for not making a fuss about it. And I had not got a

gold watch and chain—which was another, still better. And he had promised me one from London, only the day before—which was a third, best of all. If I had known what the law considered the crime to be, and how the law punished it, I should have taken proper care of myself, and have exposed him then and there. But I knew nothing—and I longed for the gold watch. All the conditions I insisted on were that he should tell me everything. I was as curious about his affairs then, as you are about mine now. He granted my conditions—why, you will see presently.

"This, put in short, is what I heard from him. He did not willingly tell me all that I tell you here. I drew some of it from him by persuasion, some of it by questions. I was determined to have all the truth—and I believe I got it.

"He knew no more than any one else of what the state of things really was between his father and mother, till after his mother's death. Then, his father confessed it, and promised to do what he could for his son. He died having done nothing—not having even made a will. The son (who can blame him?) wisely provided for himself. He came to England at once, and took possession of the property. There was no one to suspect him, and no one to say him nay. His father and mother had always lived as man and wife—none of the few people who were acquainted with them ever supposed them to be anything else. The right person to claim the property (if the truth had been known) was a distant relation, who had no idea of ever getting it, and who was away at sea when his father died. He had no difficulty, so far—he took possession, as a matter of course. But he could not borrow money on the property as a matter of course. There were two things wanted of him, before he could do this. One was a certificate of his birth, and the other was a certificate of his parents' marriage. The certificate of his birth was easily got—he was born abroad, and the certificate was there in due form. The other matter was a difficulty—and that difficulty brought him to Old Welmingham.

"But for one consideration, he might have gone to Knowlesbury instead. His mother had been living there just before she met with his father—living under her maiden name; the truth being that she was really a married woman, married in Ireland, where her husband had ill-used her and had afterwards gone off with some other person. I give you this fact on good authority: Sir Felix mentioned it to his son, as the reason why he had not married. You may wonder why the son, knowing that his parents had met each other at Knowlesbury, did not play his first tricks with the register of that church, where it might have been fairly presumed his father and mother were married. The reason was, that the clergyman who did duty at Knowlesbury church, in the year eighteen hundred and three (when, according to his birth-certificate, his father and mother *ought* to have been married), was alive still, when he took possession of the property in the New Year of eighteen

hundred and twenty-seven. This awkward circumstance forced him to extend his inquiries to our neighbourhood. There, no such danger existed: the former clergyman at our church having been dead for some years.

"Old Welmingham suited his purpose, as well as Knowlesbury. His father had removed his mother from Knowlesbury, and had lived with her at a cottage on the river, a little distance from our village. People who had known his solitary ways when he was single, did not wonder at his solitary ways when he was married. If he had been anything but a hideous, crooked creature to look at, his retired life with the lady might have raised some suspicions; but, as things were, his hiding his ugliness and his deformity in the strictest privacy surprised nobody. He lived in our neighbourhood till he came in possession of the Park. After three or four and twenty years had passed, who was to say (the clergyman being dead) that his marriage had not been as private as the rest of his life, and that it had not taken place at Old Welmingham church?

"So, as I told you, the son found our neighbourhood the surest place he could choose, to set things right secretly in his own interests. It may surprise you to hear that what he really did to the marriage-register was done on the spur of the moment—done on second thoughts.

"His first notion was only to tear the leaf out (in the right year and month), to destroy it privately, to go back to London, and to tell the lawyers to get him the necessary certificate of his father's marriage, innocently referring them of course to the date on the leaf that was gone. Nobody could say his father and mother had *not* been married, after that—and whether, under the circumstances, they would stretch a point or not, about lending him the money (he thought they would), he had his answer ready, at all events, if a question was ever raised about his right to the name and the estate.

"But when he came to look privately at the register for himself, he found at the bottom of one of the pages for the year eighteen hundred and three, a blank space left, seemingly through there being no room to make a long entry there, which was made instead at the top of the next page. The sight of this chance altered all his plans. It was an opportunity he had never hoped for, or thought of—and he took it, you know how. The blank space, to have exactly tallied with his birth-certificate, ought to have occurred in the February part of the register. It occurred in the April part instead. However, in this case, if suspicious questions were asked, the answer was not hard to find. He had only to describe himself as a seven months' child.

"I was fool enough, when he told me his story, to feel some interest and some pity for him—which was just what he calculated on, as you will see. I thought him hardly used. It was not his fault that his father and mother were not married; and it was not his father's and mother's fault, either. A more scrupulous woman than I was—a woman who had not set her heart on a gold watch and chain—would have

found some excuses for him. At all events, I held my tongue, and helped to screen what he was about. He was some time getting the ink the right colour (mixing it over and over again in pots and bottles of mine), and some time, afterwards, in practising the handwriting. He succeeded in the end—and made an honest woman of his mother, after she was in her grave. So far, I don't deny that he behaved honourably enough to me. He gave me my watch and chain; both were of superior workmanship, and very expensive. I have got them still—the watch goes beautifully.

"You said, the other day, that Mrs. Clements had told you everything she knew. In that case, there is no need for me to write about the trumpery scandal by which I was the sufferer—the innocent sufferer, I positively assert. You must know as well as I do what the notion was which my husband took into his head, when he found me and my fine-gentleman acquaintance meeting each other privately, and talking secrets together. But what you don't know, is how it ended between that same gentleman and myself. You shall read, and see how he behaved to me.

"The first words I said to him, when I saw the turn things had taken, were, 'Do me justice—clear my character of a stain on it which you know I don't deserve. I don't want you to make a clean breast of it to my husband—only tell him, on your word of honour as a gentleman, that he is wrong, and that I am not to blame in the way he thinks I am. Do me that justice, at least, after all I have done for you.' He flatly refused, in so many words. He told me, plainly, that it was his interest to let my husband and all my neighbours believe the falsehood—because, as long as they did so, they were quite certain never to suspect the truth. I had a spirit of my own; and I told him they should know the truth from my lips. His reply was short, and to the point. If I spoke, I was a lost woman, as certainly as he was a lost man.

"Yes! it had come to that. He had deceived me about the risk I ran in helping him. He had practised on my ignorance; he had tempted me with his gifts; he had interested me with his story—and the result of it was that he had made me his accomplice. He owned this, coolly; and he ended by telling me, for the first time, what the frightful punishment really was for his offence, and for any one who helped him to commit it. In those days, the Law was not so tender-hearted as I hear it is now. Murderers were not the only people liable to be hanged; and women convicts were not treated like ladies in undeserved distress. I confess he frightened me—the mean impostor! the cowardly black-guard! Do you understand, now, how I hated him? Do you understand why I am taking all this trouble—thankfully taking it—to gratify the curiosity of the meritorious young gentleman who hunted him down?

"Well, to go on. He was hardly fool enough to drive me to downright desperation. I was not the sort of woman whom it was quite safe to hunt into a corner—he knew that, and

wisely quieted me with proposals for the future. I deserved some reward (he was kind enough to say) for the service I had done him, and some compensation (he was so obliging as to add) for what I had suffered. He was quite willing—generous scoundrel!—to make me a handsome yearly allowance, payable quarterly, on two conditions. First, I was to hold my tongue—in my own interests as well as in his. Secondly, I was not to stir away from Welmingham, without first letting him know, and waiting till I had obtained his permission. In my own neighbourhood, no virtuous female friends would tempt me into dangerous gossiping at the tea-table—in my own neighbourhood, he would always know where to find me. A hard condition, that second one—but I accepted it. What else was I to do? I was left helpless, with the prospect of a coming incumbrance in the shape of a child. What else was I to do? Cast myself on the mercy of my runaway idiot of a husband who had raised the scandal against me? I would have died first. Besides, the allowance *was* a handsome one. I had a better income, a better house over my head, better carpets on my floors, than half the women who turned up the whites of their eyes at the sight of me. The dress of Virtue, in our parts, was cotton print. I had silk.

"So, I accepted the conditions he offered me, and made the best of them, and fought my battle with my respectable neighbours on their own ground, and won it in course of time—as you saw yourself. How I kept his Secret (and mine) through all the years that have passed from that time to this; and whether my late daughter, Anne, ever really crept into my confidence, and got the keeping of the Secret too—are questions, I dare say, to which you are curious to find an answer. Well! my gratitude refuses you nothing. I will turn to a fresh page, and give you the answer, presently."

SHIPWRECKS.

Is a man's life worth four pounds seven shillings and twopence?

The wind moans and pipes through the trees in the garden, and comes rumbling down the chimneys of our lodging by the sea. There rises from the beach a solemn roar of waters. Through splashes of rain on the window-pane, through the twilight gloom of a spring evening wrapped in the wild night of storm, we look out on the glancing of white lines of surf, and at the upward lightning of the rockets from a vessel in distress. As if defiant of the little flash of man's distress, the black cloud is ablaze; and, for an instant, we make out a brig distinctly. Had we time, we could count the men upon her deck. Darkness descends again as the floor under us is shaken by the mighty jarring of the thunder. Our hearts beat in the presence of no holiday spectacle. We came hither for sea air and health, choosing a spot where there is a bold coast, a fine sea, and only a small fisher hamlet near us. Here, we learn, there are many wrecks. The frail child we brought with us has fled from

the window to her sofa in the farthest corner of the room, and lies there panting with her hands before her eyes. I dare not leave her to go down to the wild shore. And what can I, weak invalid, do when the very boatmen can do nothing but assemble in a hopeless crowd upon the beach? About them are hovering their mothers, wives, and daughters, who will resist by entreaty and force any attempt to put out through such a surf. The women on the shore here have their way; and so God comfort the wives and mothers of those out at sea.

I did not lift next morning the corner of the sail covering that by which my old pilot was watching solemnly. He sat on the great heap of sea-weed that now fringed the shore.

"How many, Jem?" I asked, after I had stood by him for a long time in silence.

"Change for six fi'-pun' notes under you sail," Jem answered.

"How can you jest—"

"Four tight sailors, a boy, and——" he turned the sail from the face of a drowned seven-year old girl, her hair like that of our own ailing little Ethel. Jem finished his pipe gloomily.

I sat beside the spread sail in a reverie of selfish pity.

"When you preached for the vicar, sir, last Sunday," presently said Jem, "you talked something like as if money was dirt. Perhaps it is. Perhaps that's dirt under the sail."

The nurse was bringing Ethel in her arms towards us, and I motioned her away, although the child cried bitterly to come to me and her rough sailor friend. This morning her walk must not be upon the shore.

"To be sure," said Jem, a little grimly, "it's not dirt when there's life in it. What a many sorts of change people may take out of five pounds."

"What *do* you mean?"

"Why, there was all hands lost last night for want of a life-boat here. My son-in-law is coxswain of the nearest life-boat, but that's thirty miles from us. We've lots of wrecks, but never a boat yet. There are boats wanted, belike, in hundreds of other places where there are only poor people ashore, though there are none the kinder rocks and shoals at sea. *We* can't set up a boat."

"A few five-pound notes," I said, "would not have done it for you."

"Look here, sir," said Jem. "My son-in-law, he's but a rough fisherman who knows his trade, a stout lad, and not stupid on salt water. He gets eight pound a year for being coxswain of the life-boat at his place, and very proud he are for so to be. Once a quarter he goes out with the boat's crew, men like himself, for exercising in rough weather, and they get their day's pay too, as is fitting. They've a boat that'll do anything but go out walking ashore by itself, and that lives in a home of its own, handy to the sea, ready to slip out on a wreck at a minute's notice. What he tells me is, which is the only learning he's got from books kep' in the boat-house, that when the money that has

been spent in setting life-boats up about the coast is squared against the lives saved, there's a life for every four pound seven and twopence. That's the sum. So, the more five-pound notes go that way, the fewer of us will go this way;" and he laid a wrinkled finger on the sail. "But you couldn't tell 'em anything from the pulpit, sir, unless it wor in charity sermons, about what is to be bought with 'fil-pun' notes. Ah, dear! I wish I had a lot of 'em!"

When, a week after the storm, I went in search of a physician to the seaport Jem had named, and, waiting his time to return with me when he had seen his patients on the spot, walked sadly by the ripple of a placid sea, I came by accident upon the life-boat house. It was a neat stone building with some show of architecture in it, with a verandah east and west sheltering forms upon which pilots and others might sit under cover in foul weather. I had been told that, at this town, boat-house and boat were the gift of a lady of fortune, and it was evident that she was one who did not give with two fingers. The wide folding-doors opening upon the sea were closed and locked. A boy with a shrimp basket, at my request, went off in search of Bill the coxswain, who had charge of one of the keys; and Bill was talkative enough when he found whence I came, and whither I was about to return that evening, also that I would take a bit of parcel back with me from his wife to her old father, and that I did really care very much to know what he could show and tell me. But what he told me caused me to make more inquiry, to get books and papers, and, at last, to write as I now do, while I sit watching the night through by the bedside of my little Ethel, with the moan of the night wind and the measured dash of the sea filling up all pauses in my thoughts.

Upon our island coast touch, in each year, ships that employ a million of men and boys. Every year, about a thousand vessels suffer upon the shores of Britain, wreck total or partial, and sometimes five hundred, sometimes fifteen hundred (in the very last year sixteen hundred and forty-six) lives have been lost. In the first half only of this current year, the average of twelve months of disaster has already been attained. Of the total wrecks, nearly one half the number is found to arise from errors in seamanship or other preventable causes, and seventeen in a hundred have occurred to unseaworthy vessels. Some also are lost (there have been eight lost in one year) because they have been provided with defective charts or compasses. It is the duty of some one to secure the timely condemnation of old vessels, which are now sent out until they sink at sea, and bring to an untimely death the men they carry. Of the ships lost, only one out of four is lost in a storm. Oversight, ignorance, neglect, and false economy, are more cruel than storms. Wrecks themselves are in a great degree preventable. But here the only question is, how to prevent loss of life by wreck within sight of the British shores.

The wrecks on our coast last year were more numerous than they have been in any former year of which record is kept. The excess was caused by two violent gales. In the gale of the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth of October, there were one hundred and thirty-three total wrecks and ninety casualties. The number of lives lost in that one gale on our shores was within two of eight hundred. The loss of life would have been great, had the dead list not been more than doubled by the loss of four hundred and forty-six lives in the Royal Charter. After a rest of five days, the winds blew again on the first day of November; and, in that second gale, twenty-nine lives were lost in the wreck of thirty-eight vessels. There were also two great wrecks on other days to swell the death list. In the beginning of spring, more than four hundred lives were lost at once in the Pomona. Fifty-six were lost in midwinter with the Blervie Castle. These were all deaths on our shore. Of wrecks at sea nothing is said. It has been found that the proportion of accident has become much greater than it used to be in British, as compared with foreign vessels. Putting out of account the coasting trade, and reckoning the oversea trade only, the chance of accident to a British ship is once in one hundred and seventy-five voyages; but that, to a foreign ship, the average of accident is only once in three hundred and thirty-five voyages; accidents upon our coasts, therefore—strange fact!—are twice as likely to occur to a vessel that is at home, as to the vessel of a stranger.

One accident occurred to a vessel aged more than a century, one to a ship between eighty and ninety, and another to a ship between ninety and a hundred years of age. Sixty-four wrecks were of ships more than fifty years old; but, it is between the ages of fourteen and twenty, that ships have appeared to suffer most. The age next in liability to misfortune was between twenty and thirty; then the comparatively new ships, between three and seven, suffered most. Of the wrecks last year, more than six hundred were on the east coast, less than five hundred on the west coast, and less than one hundred and fifty on the south coast. On the Irish coast there were but ninety-nine wrecks, against one hundred and sixty-eight in the preceding year, but wrecks on the Isle of Man increased in number from six to twenty-eight.

The value of the property lost by the wrecks on our coast last year was two millions of money, the lives lost were, as before said, one thousand six hundred and forty-five; but as there were more wrecks, more losses than ever, so were there also more lives saved from wreck than ever. About three hundred were saved by life-boats, nearly as many by the rocket-and-mortar apparatus, a thousand by luggers, coast-guard or fishermen's boats, and small craft, nearly eight hundred by ships and steam-vessels, and six by the heroism of individuals.

Last year, as in the previous year, it was the south-west wind that proved most disastrous. Of the two most fatal gales, Admiral Fitzroy

has pointed out that they were foretold by both thermometer and barometer, and that their advance could have been telegraphed from the southern to the eastern and northern coasts in sufficient time to ensure full preparation. "It is proved," writes the admiral, "that storms are preceded by distinct warnings, and that they advance in particular directions towards places where their influence is felt some time after it has become marked elsewhere. Therefore, information may be conveyed by telegraph, in time to caution those at a distance who are likely to be visited by bad weather." Of the message swifter than the wind, no use has yet been made for the protection of our sailors.

Warning was again neglected, of the yet more terrible gales of this year. In the lost Yarmouth fishing-boats alone, one hundred and thirty men perished, two hundred in the boats from Yarmouth and the adjacent dozen miles of coast, and they have left two hundred children fatherless.

The courage and humanity of all the boatmen of our coast appear in the return of lives saved. We must not think of the rocket-and-mortar apparatus and the life-boat stations as the sole dependence of the shipwrecked mariner whose eye strains towards British ground expecting help. But the life-boat can brave storms in which a coast-guard boat or fisher boat could not venture to put out; it has a trained crew and every provision for the rescue of men from a wreck; it is ready to slip out to its work at a minute's warning, and the men saved by a life-boat very commonly are men whom nothing but a life-boat could have saved.

Almost the first blot on the records of the life-boat service was the selfish struggle, during one of the late gales, among men of the Yarmouth life-boat, who retained the boat ashore, disputing among themselves for the right to the place of coxswain, while men were being drowned before their eyes from a wrecked brig upon the Scroby Sands. The boat that could have saved all hands went out too late, and came back as it went out, in disgrace. Very different was the temper of the Margate life-boatmen, who, coming to the shore a minute or two late, and finding their boat manned by other seamen, threw them their waterproofs, with a kind cheer to speed them on their swift errand of mercy.

There is a fund annually granted by this nation for the acknowledgment of gallant services in saving life at sea. It is spent, not in reward, but in thankful recognition of a generosity bounded by no national distinctions. Now, it is an American captain who saves thirty English lives, maintains them in his ship for forty days, and joins his owners in refusing compensation. Now, it is a French custom-house officer, himself unable to swim, who has plunged into the sea to save a drowning Englishman, or who totters from a sick-bed to help in the rescue of an English wreck upon his coast. Now, it is a Genoese captain who saves a crew of fourteen men, maintains them for three weeks, and will

not be paid. Now, it is a Greek and now a Dutchman, now a Dane and now a Portuguese, who has braved death and storm for the help of imperilled Englishmen. The Maltese seaman of the Royal Charter none forget.

The public recognition of the duty for which all hearts are so ready, as regards the saving of wretched men upon our shores, has for its best evidence the life-boat. There were last year one hundred and fifty-eight life-boat stations on the coasts of the three kingdoms. Many of these are maintained by the harbour commissioners, dock trustees, or other local representatives of shipping interests, of the ports at which they are found. One or two are maintained by the generosity of individuals; but the great majority—ninety-two last year, and after a few months this year, one hundred and one—are under the management of the National Life-boat Institution. This Institution relies on the public for its means, but has a subsidy of about two thousand a year from the Board of Trade, which spends also another two thousand on the maintenance and use of the mortar-and-rocket apparatus. On the Institution just named, government depends for the maintenance and advancement of an efficient life-boat system. What is its history, and what is it about?

It was founded six-and-thirty years ago, and is actively represented by a committee mainly composed of mercantile men and officers in the navy, with the Chairman of Lloyd's, the Comptroller-General of the Coast-Guard, the Hydrographer to the Admiralty, and others. The committee sits in London, and, on the part of the Institution, its business is to build, station, and maintain in repair life-boats of the most perfect description; to furnish them with all necessary appurtenances, including boat-houses and carriages for the conveyance of boats to the sea; also to provide, through a local committee, for the proper management of each boat and the exercising of its crew. The Institution also grants money, medals, votes of thanks to those who have risked life in the effort to save shipwrecked men. It collects and turns to account the newest and best information on the construction of life-boats, the management of boats in surf and storm, the best method of restoring animation to drowned men in whom a spark of life may linger, and whatever else may be found serviceable to the cause it represents.

There have been reported to the committee of this Institution, by coast-guard officers and Lloyd's agents, sixty points upon our coast at which a life-boat station is still urgently required. Two years ago, the Institution possessed seventy boats. A year ago, it possessed eighty-one boats. At the annual meeting held this year, it was reported that the Institution had placed on the coast twelve more boats (one of which is the free gift of Miss Burdett Coutts), and had others in course of building, which would raise the force of their fleet to one hundred and one, the largest life-saving fleet that the world has ever seen. Each boat, apart from any help it might give to a wreck, has been

out once a quarter in picked rough weather for exercise of the men, and for test of the efficiency of all its tackling. For such exercise in stormy weather, every man has had a day's pay of five shillings, and for duty at wrecks the payment has been ten shillings a man per day, and a pound for night-work. Four thousand stout men of the coast are enrolled as members of the life-boat fleet, and have pulled oars during the last year in its service. The cost of managing is as little as it can be. But the exertions made last year compelled a large expenditure in excess of income. Great care is taken, by a minute system of reports and frequent inspection, to secure the constant readiness and sustain perfectly the right equipment of each boat.

Except a little interest from funded capital, and the subsidy from the Mercantile Marine Fund of about two thousand a year, the Life-boat Institution is obliged to look wholly to the public for augmenting the life-boat fleet. But it is to be remembered, also, that this kind of expenditure does not represent all that has been done; the central Institution often grants its funds in aid of local efforts, and of the life-boatmen's pay a thousand a year collected from among their neighbours never enters into the accounts of the society. The sympathy of all hearts with the work also produces savings that are, in fact, gifts, not represented on the balance-sheet. A railway company, for example, or a steam-packet company, is proud to convey a life-boat to its destination free of charge.

About two years ago the Norfolk Shipwreck Association voted itself into a branch of the Life-boat Institution, and the additional strength of the main body, in as far as it is due to this transfer (represented as the addition of a thousand pounds last year to the means already detailed), does not, of course, correspond to an additional provision for the saving of life on our shores. There is no piece of English coast so perilous as that of Norfolk.

The cost of a life-boat is not much under two hundred pounds. It must be strong, very strong in its breadth, buoyant, swift on a heavy sea, constructed to discharge at once the water that it ships, and to right itself when upset, and it must also supply the greatest possible amount of stowage room for passengers. The ingenious carriage contrived for its run to the sea and instant launching costs from sixty to a hundred pounds, and the boat-house about another hundred pounds. Every man of the crew is supplied with a cork life-belt, which he is bound to wear whenever he goes afloat in the craft. The belts hang against the walls of the boat-house, and the boat's equipment is then kept always ready for immediate use. This consists of an anchor and cable, a twenty-five pound grapnel to retain the boat for a while near a wreck, a boat's painter, a set and a half of short fir oars, two steering sweep-oars, two boat-hooks with lanyards, a hand-grapnel with heaving-line, a sharp axe and two small sharp hatchets, two life-buoys with attached lines, short knotted life-lines, a boat

binnacle and spirit compass, oil, matches, a spy-glass, a lantern, a fisherman's port-fire, hand-rockets, a vessel of fresh water and a drinking-cup, some nautical sundries with a box of certain tools, and a lamp *kept trimmed*. All these things have to be kept in their right places in the boat and always ready. The establishment of a life-boat station having once been set up on the coast, thirty pounds a year is the cost of its maintenance.

Among the little publications of the institution is a set of instructions for the recovery of the apparently drowned, which cannot be too widely diffused. They are founded upon principles laid down by the late Doctor Marshall Hall, and had been made the subject of extensive inquiries by the Institution before they were officially presented as the best practical advice that science can afford. These rules are easily remembered, easily acted upon, and there is no person to whom the knowledge of them may not, by some unhappy chance, become a matter of the deepest consequence. So, here is the substance of them:

Send for a doctor, blankets, and dry clothes, but wait for nothing. Endeavour at once to restore breathing and maintain warmth, and persevere in the endeavour not for minutes but for hours.

To restore breathing, clear the throat by placing the body on the ground, face downwards, with one arm under the forehead. Fluid will escape by the mouth, the tongue will fall and leave the windpipe open. Cleanse and wipe the mouth. If breathing do not follow, or be very faint, endeavour to excite it artificially. To do this, first turn the body rapidly upon its side and stimulate the nostrils with snuff or smelling-salts, the throat with a feather. If that fail, instantly replace the body on its face, setting a folded coat under the chest to press upon it and force out the air. Then turn the body gently to one side and a little beyond, and briskly back upon its face, keeping up these two movements at the rate of about fifteen to the minute, now and then varying the side. Aid the pressure of the coat under the chest by brisk simultaneous pressure with the hand upon the back between the shoulder-blades.

Let the body never be turned on its back, and let the open air come to it freely.

To maintain warmth, dry the body and wrap it in a blanket, leaving, except in severe weather, the face, neck, and chest, exposed.

After breathing has been restored, and not until then, rub the limbs upwards; use hot flannels, &c. Give first a teaspoonful of warm water, afterwards small quantities of wine, brandy-and-water, or coffee. Keep the patient in bed, and encourage sleep.

Another of the publications of the society, founded upon persevering inquiry among the expert boatmen on our coasts, gives clear directions for the management of open boats in heavy surf and broken water. This little book has been translated into French, Spanish, and Swedish, and has been circulated extensively through-

out Her Majesty's fleet. In putting out to sea, or in coming to land when the weather is rough, all the peril is upon the broken sea, and life depends on a distinct understanding of the dangers to be battled with, and the right way of overcoming them. In spite of all knowledge and skill, the Aldborough life-boat was upset last December in a very high surf, when on its way to a vessel in distress, and three of its crew of fifteen men were drowned. But it is a remarkable fact, that until that day during all the six-and-thirty years of the existence of the Life-boat Institution, while more than eleven thousand lives had been saved from shipwreck, of the men who went out in life-boats to their rescue, not one had been lost.

I could say more, but Ethel is awake, and, wandering in fever, talks with the child drowned in the storm that scared away her little rest of health.

OPENING A BARROW.

WHEN a friendly letter came to me one bright day last spring, from Oldbuck, a country squire down in Ramshire, that great sheep-breeding country, begging me to come and assist at the opening of one of the great Ramshire tumuli, I lost no time in at once packing up my portmanteau and setting off by the S. W. R. to visit my old antiquarian friend, my chum at Eton, and my comrade in the hunting-field.

There is a charm in opening anything, whether it be a parcel from the country, or a box of books. I like the first analytic cut at a Stilton, the first ride over a new line of country, the first dip of the line in a new stream. There is a hope and expectancy about it, coupled with a mystery in the unsounded depths of the untried, which I suppose produces the pleasure.

But here the mystery sets one's antiquarian imagination on the burn and on the boil. We might find a skeleton in armour, one of Death's sentinels, with spear and sword laid ready beside its fleshless hands. We might, for all I knew, dig up Caractacus himself, or Boadicea's first cousin, or some silent Briton who had seen Cæsar, and drawn a bow at the legionaries. We might see through the fresh dark earth a great gold torques, one of those collars of twisted bullion that the ancient British kings wore, or one of those tiaras of gold plate that the arch-Druids donned on great mistletoe-cutting festivals, when the men with the white and blue robes and the golden sickles rehearsed Norma on the most tremendous scale, in the oak forest, or round the sacred circles of grey stones.

A dog-cart bore me from the station, to the pretty Ramshire cottage, where my antiquarian bachelor friend hoards his flint-axes, elk-horns, torques, old coins, and bronze spear-heads. It was a drive under a mile or two of black-boughed elms, where the stars seemed to hang like fruit, or like the little tapers that twinkle in a Christmas-tree—a door opening into a glowing room—a supper—some seething grog—and a plunge into an ocean of best bed.

When I awoke next morning, I thought at first I was in a cathedral, and was staring through a great crimson stained window; but it proved only to be the sunlight shining through the red curtains. They were not angels as I had dreamed, in the choir, but thrushes and blackbirds singing in the laurels outside, boasting of their blue eggs and their thriving families. When I wrenched myself from bed and looked out at the sky, the colour of a forget-me-not, and saw the sun blazing on the glossy laurel-leaves, and the swallows studying entomology like so many transmigrated Kirbys and Spences and Rev. Mr. Whites of Selborne, I felt quite ashamed of myself in not being up to watch the pyrotechnics of a Ramshire sunrise—the only thing which Oldbuck acknowledges to be as good as it was in the thirteenth century.

I was busy down stairs watching a monster of a speckled thrush pulling a worm out of the lawn, which he did with a give and take, pull-baker pull-devil principle, like a sailor-boy at a rope a little too heavy for him, when the breakfast gong went off and Oldbuck appeared instantly, like Zadkiel at the same summons, in high spirits—with Colt Hoare's Wiltshire under his arm. It lay on the side-table beside the frilled ham, and was occasionally referred to during our meal by my enthusiastic friend.

Breakfast done, the dogs loosed in case of a rabbit, off we set to Peterwood: a fir plantation about a mile away on the downs, where the resting-place of the ancient Briton we were going to wake up, lay. The keepers were to meet us on the upland, with pickaxes, spades, and other resurrectionary apparatus. Oldbuck was great on the pugnacious illogical Celt, on the boat-headed Pict, on the long-headed Scot, on the Belge, and the Allobroge, and the Cangi, on the slow struggle that the Romans had for Ramshire, winning it, red-inch by inch, and dyking back the blue-painted deer-slayers with trenched camp and palisade and mound.

It was a day of soft burning blue, with now and then a triumphal arch of rainbow for Queen April to pass under, weeping like a bride in mingled joy and pleasure. The roadside banks were starred with cowslips, weighed down by tax-collecting bees, and under the tasseled hazels the royal purple of the violets formed a carpet. As for the white clouds, their edges were so round and sharp cut, that, had they been so much white paper cut out and stuck against the sky, they could not have looked harder edged; but they changed shape so often, and folded, and lifted, and scattered so much like snow turned into vapour, that they relieved the inquisitive and unsatisfied mind.

Now, we reached the grizzled down, speckled with furze, churlishly blossoming yellow amidst its thorns, and, striking up an old Roman road called the Ox Drove, we made straight for a white board, with its legend warning trespassers who could not read, just on the skirts of the fir plantation, where the barrow was. A long line of tumuli, the labours of that modern barrow maker, the mole, pointed our way. A

shout from the interior of the wood showed us we were right, as Oldbuck, quoting Chancer, a sure sign of his being in the highest spirits, made a plunge among the firs, and I followed him.

Here was the Briton's burying-place—a low mound, covered with scanty grass, and brown fir needles, and resinous scaly fir cones, and just a violet or two. It had been nibbled away by time, and rains, and heat, and the friction of winds, and rabbits' feet, and foxes' scratching; until it was a mere small wen of earth, half hidden among the coppery fir-trees. Very many centuries ago, that mound was soft fresh earth, and warm tears fell fast upon its surface. You have slept long enough, very Ancient Briton; it is time for you to rise. It is a fine morning. You will find the country improved. Steam, sir, that wonderful invention, has revolutionised the world. I will lend you Pinnoek's Catechism, and you shall read the History of the Norman Conquest, my good man.

The two keepers, who look like the sextons in Hamlet, are of a coppery, winter-apple colour, and are of a strong build, well adapted for grappling with poachers. They both wear brown velvet jackets, stained with hare's blood, and smeared with fish slime, and their legs are cased in hard leather gaiters that look like greaves of rusty iron. To it they go, as if digging for treasure, paring off the pads of turf, chopping at the clawing roots of the firs, and picking out the broken bones of mother earth, which men call flints.

Oldbuck advised at once cutting to the centre of the mound, on the Colt Hoare principle, in order to reach the central burial-chamber, which is generally found constructed of four square stones. We opened, therefore, two trenches, one in a perpendicular, and the other in a horizontal direction, so as to meet in the centre.

Oldbuck took a shovel, I took a spade, and we worked as well as the best; no navigators ever earned their wages more satisfactorily than we did. The elder keeper, with the white moth trout-flies round his rusty hat, toiled after us in vain. We soon came upon the remains of bodies: at first merely small finger-bones, brown, and not unlike the mouthpieces of pipes: then the ends of ribs, protruding like roots from the slabs of clay: then, empty boxes of skulls, men's and women's: then puzzle-pieces of disjointed vertebrae. Oldbuck was in raptures.

Some bits of rude, black, unglazed pottery were next thrown up, and the brown bones, piled up at the foot of a fir-tree, began to grow into a heap that, put together, would have been sufficient to build up six or seven human beings. But bronze spear-head, or brooch, or Celt axe, we found not, much to Oldbuck's mortification.

I could not help thinking that as for the glazed pottery it looked wonderfully like the fragment of a modern Briton's black teapot; but I dared not say so to Oldbuck, who was hanging over it as Romeo might have done over Juliet's glove. It was certainly the base of some culinary vessel, rudely fashioned into a round

shape, and totally without ornament—not even that toothed edge, which so resembles the decoration round the edge of a beef-steak pie, and which the modern cook's knife so readily executes.

As for the leg-bones which left moulds of themselves in the clay they had so long been imbedded in, they were sadly crumbly and porous; white thread-like roots of bent grass had crept into their sockets, and the blue poisonous fibres of couch-grass had grown through their tubes, and matted round the caps of the thigh bones. But the skulls, some male and some female, sent Oldbuck into paroxysms of theories and into prophetic utterances of new ethnological systems.

They were unquestionably curious, and adapted to set one thinking over the dwellers in the wattled houses, and the blue-stained men who trod the pleasant downs of Ramshire many centuries ago. Oldbuck declared violently that they served to establish ingenious Mr. Wright's theory about the deformed skulls found at Uriconium, where the Roman swords had operated upon them.

They were of a mean ape-like character, low, flat, and with scarcely an inch of forehead, though the bones over the eyes (where the perceptive faculties are situated) were coarsely prominent. They might have belonged to a sort of aboriginal race, scarcely of greater mental capacity than the Bushman, that had been destroyed by the Celt. The bones of the male skulls were of enormous thickness—twice the thickness of skulls of our own day; so thick that a bronze axe could hardly have split them; while the female skulls were thin as terra-cotta, and fragile as delicate pie-crust. Oldbuck suggested that the men, bareheaded, were out all day in the fen and forest; while the women remained in their huts, so that *their* bones remained finer and softer. I reminded him of the old story in Herodotus, of the battle-field, when it was easy to tell the Persian's from the Egyptian's skull, because the one which had always been kept coddled in a turban was soft, and could be cracked by a stone, while the other, which had been ever exposed to the sun and wind, resisted the utmost degree of violence. Oldbuck, kneading some clay out of the cavity of a Briton's skull with his finger and thumb, said the story was "very well indeed," and he would make a note of it for his paper on the subject of this barrow.

Some teeth that we found, set Oldbuck off again. They were of a curious, low, animal kind, very narrow and long, more like the front incisor teeth of a beaver than a man's. They had belonged to a young man in the age before dentists; they were still covered with beautiful white enamel, and their edges were not the least worn—just a little deer's flesh the owner had gnawed; then, the struggle of swords, the blazing huts, the glare of the advancing eagle—darkness, and this long sleep under the mound.

All the while that we mused and ravelled out our dim theories, the fir wood was pulsing with the brooding motherly note of innumerable wood-pigeons, the leaping squirrels eyed us

from above, the little birds sang their secrets to each other among the bristling cones, and over the golden floor of moss and the last year's leaves raced the rabbits, frightened, yet purposely and unrestrainably inquisitive.

"And here," cried Oldbuck, putting himself in a Hamlet position, with a skull of the low barbaric type in the palm of his thin, pale, intellectual hand, "under these draughty trees, with the surf sounding ever through their prophesying branches, must this Bushman tribe of hunters and fishermen have dwelt, long centuries ago. Here, their women must have cooked the deer's flesh, and plaited the wattled huts, and spread the fern-leaves for the beds, and prepared the arrows, and nursed the children; and here the sinewy men, with the low brows and blue stained limbs, must have wielded the flint-axe, and darted the spear, and raced with naked feet over the springy down, with no thought of Rome or of the swift-winged eagle, till one day came the legionaries in close phalanx, with a blaze of gold and purple, and with a cloud of stones from the slings heralding their approach, and stinging showers of arrows from the light armed. They circle the wood, there is a crash of axes, a jar of swords, a burst of groans and curses, flames start up; then there is a great silence, and through the twilight I see grassy mounds rising on the skirts of the wood, looking towards the lower country."

Here the keeper wiped his forehead, and threw out some more bones, with a reflection that they were "mortal old," which seemed to cover all he thought upon the subject, though he did go on to tell us that the barrow we were opening was in a line with two others, some distance off, and that the trench from which the earth was taken for the barrow then specially under consideration, was still to be seen a few hundred yards off. It was his, "kippur's," opinion that the large flints found immediately over the bones were trod in upon them for security, and with malice aforethought. The "kippur" also was of opinion that the black particles here and there among the earth, were wood ashes: whether placed there on purpose or not he could not tell, not he.

Oldbuck here remarked that it became me to observe that the six or seven bodies had evidently been buried in a hurry, as after a battle or massacre, and had certainly not been interred with decency, or with care, or with affectionate consideration. Had this tumult been that of a chieftain's in times of peace, it would have contained amber beads, or gold torque, or spear-head, or flint-axe.

Here the "kippur," who had been examining the barbaric skull, put his enormous dirty notched thumb on a dent in it, and asked Oldbuck, sharply, "What that was?" Oldbuck at once—with an antiquarian's usual daring imaginativeness—boldly said, "An evident confusion from the blow of a blunt instrument, probably an axe;" which seemed to satisfy the keeper, and set him digging more savagely than ever. Oldbuck bade me observe that the bones lay all near

the centre of the mound, and that towards one side beyond the centre they ceased altogether.

Oldbuck was very entertaining on our way to the station. He told me how the finest gold collar ever found had been discovered in the loose earth that a fox had scratched out; how in Scotland a curious helmet of the Bruce period was found jammed between two rocks; how in Ireland the relic case of a bell of great antiquity was discovered on the top of a mountain, where, if not placed by some rebels for safety, it must have remained for centuries.

What a walk back we had over those Ramshire downs, where the young winds seem to be put out to nurse! What mists of liquid opal and pearl veiled the grassy slopes, what white fans of sunbeams pointed me out my way to Chalkton, whose grey steeple I could see in the distance with the gilt weathercock on its apex, blazing as if it were melting in the sunshine. The awkward hares limped before us on the dark chocolate-coloured fallows, or over the broad dim sward of the down, speckled black with furze-bushes, or round by the dark battalions of firs that seemed filing down to meet some invisible commander-in-chief at some special spot of concentration. The rabbits cantered over the road as if running perpetual errands, and the blackbirds chinked and shot to and fro like pall-makers' black shuttles. The shadows raced before us along the broad white road, putting out the sunshine with fitful extinguishment, having the effect of an opening and closing eye perpetually on us as we walked. Even the old battered milestones, grey with lichen, and spotted orange here and there, cheered us by their lessening numbers, and soon the brown thatched roofs and white walls of Chalkton appeared before us in a vision of sunlight.

Hearty red faces were on the platform, and round hats and pleasant eyes were under them; and just as the train came snorting up, slewing round its vertebrated back and tail, Oldbuck shook my hand warmly, and delicately slipped into it the brain-pan of an Ancient Briton, as a remembrance of the opening of a Ramshire barrow.

THE UNCOMMERCIAL TRAVELLER.

SOME years ago, a temporary inability to sleep, referable to a distressing impression, caused me to walk about the streets all night, for a series of several nights. The disorder might have taken a long time to conquer, if it had been faintly experimented on in bed; but it was soon defeated by the brisk treatment of getting up directly after lying down, and going out, and coming home tired at sunrise.

In the course of those nights, I finished my education in a fair amateur experience of houselessness. My principal object being to get through the night, the pursuit of it brought me into sympathetic relations with people who have no other object every night in the year.

The month was March, and the weather damp, cloudy, and cold. The sun not rising before half-past five, the night perspective looked suffi-

ciently long at half-past twelve: which was about my time for confronting it.

The restlessness of a great city, and the way in which it tumbles and tosses before it can get to sleep, formed one of the first entertainments offered to the contemplation of us houseless people. It lasted about two hours. We lost a great deal of companionship when the late public-houses turned their lamps out, and when the potmen thrust the last brawling drunkards into the street; but stray vehicles and stray people going home were left us, after that. If we were very lucky, a policeman's rattle sprang and a fray turned up; but, in general, surprisingly little of this diversion was provided. Except in the Haymarket, which is the worst kept part of London, and about Kent-street in the Borough, and along a portion of the line of the Old Kent-road, the peace was seldom violently broken. But it was always the case that London, as if in imitation of individual citizens belonging to it, had expiring fits and starts of restlessness. After all seemed quiet, if one cab rattled by, half a dozen would surely follow; and Houselessness even observed that intoxicated people appeared to be magnetically attracted towards each other, so that we knew when we saw one drunken object staggering against the shutters of a shop, that another drunken object would probably stagger up before five minutes were out, to fraternise or fight with it. When we made a divergence from the regular species of drunkard, the thin-armed puff-faced leaden-lipped gin-drinker, and encountered a rarer specimen of a more decent appearance, fifty to one but that specimen was dressed in soiled mourning. As the street experience in the night, so the street experience in the day; the common folk who come unexpectedly into a little property, come unexpectedly into a deal of liquor.

At length these flickering sparks would die away, worn out—the last veritable sparks of waking life trailed from some late pie-man or hot potato man—and London would sink to rest. And then the yearning of the houseless mind would be for any sign of company, any lighted place, any movement, anything suggestive of any one being up—nay, even so much as awake, for the houseless eye looked out for lights in windows.

Walking the streets under the pattering rain, Houselessness would walk and walk and walk, seeing nothing but the interminable tangle of streets, save at a corner, here and there, two policemen in conversation, or the sergeant or inspector looking after his men. Now and then in the night—but rarely—Houselessness would become aware of a furtive head peering out of a doorway a few yards before him, and, coming up with the head, would find a man standing bolt upright to keep within the doorway's shadow, and evidently intent upon no particular service to society. Under a kind of fascination, and in a ghostly silence suitable to the time, Houselessness and this gentleman would eye one another from head to foot, and so, without exchange of speech, part, mutually suspicious. Drip, drip, drip, from ledge and coping, splash

from pipes and water-spouts, and by-and-by the houseless shadow would fall upon the stones that pave the way to Waterloo-bridge; it being in the houseless mind to have a halfpennyworth of excuse for saying "Good night" to the toll-keeper, and catching a glimpse of his fire. A good fire and a good great-coat and a good woollen neck-shawl, were comfortable things to see in conjunction with the toll-keeper; also his brisk wakefulness was excellent company when he rattled the change of halfpence down upon that metal table of his, like a man who defied the night, with all its sorrowful thoughts, and didn't care for the coming of dawn. There was need of encouragement on the threshold of the bridge, for the bridge was dreary. The chopped up murdered man, had not been lowered with a rope over the parapet when those nights were; he was alive, and slept then quietly enough most likely, and undisturbed by any dream of where he was to come. But the river had an awful look, the buildings on the banks were muffled in black shrouds, and the reflected lights seemed to originate deep in the water, as if the spectres of suicides were holding them to show where they went down. The wild moon and clouds were as restless as an evil conscience in a tumbled bed, and the very shadow of the immensity of London seemed to lie oppressively upon the river.

Between the bridge and the two great theatres, there was but the distance of a few hundred paces, so the theatres came next. Grim and black within, at night, those great dry Wells, and lonesome to imagine, with the rows of faces faded out, the lights extinguished, and the seats all empty. One would think that nothing in them knew itself at such a time but Yorick's skull. In one of my night walks, as the church steeples were shaking the March wind and rain with the strokes of Four, I passed the outer boundary of one of these great deserts, and entered it. With a dim lantern in my hand, I groped my well-known way to the stage and looked over the orchestra—which was like a great grave dug for a time of pestilence—into the void beyond. A dismal cavern of an immense aspect, with the chandelier gone dead like everything else, and nothing visible through mist and fog and space, but tiers of winding-sheets. The ground at my feet where, when last there, I had seen the peasantry of Naples dancing among the vines, reckless of the burning mountain which threatened to overwhelm them, was now in possession of a strong serpent of engine-hose, watchfully lying in wait for the serpent Fire, and ready to fly at it if it showed its forked tongue. A ghost of a watchman carrying a faint corpse-candle, haunted the distant upper gallery and flitted away. Retiring within the proscenium, and holding my light above my head towards the rolled-up curtain—green no more, but black as ebony—my sight lost itself in a gloomy vault, showing faint indications in it of a shipwreck of canvas and cordage. Methought I felt much as a diver might, at the bottom of the sea.

In those small hours when there was no movement in the streets, it afforded matter for reflection to take Newgate in the way, and touching its rough stone, to think of the prisoners in their sleep, and then to glance in at the lodge over the spiked wicket, and see the fire and light of the watching turnkeys, on the white wall. Not an inappropriate time either to linger by that wicked little Debtor's Door—shutting tighter than any other door one ever saw—which has been Death's Door to so many. In the days of the uttering of forged one-pound notes by people tempted up from the country, how many hundreds of wretched creatures of both sexes—many quite innocent—swung out of a pitiless and inconsistent world, with the tower of yonder Christian church of Saint Sepulchre monstrously before their eyes! Is there any haunting of the Bank Parlour by the remorseful souls of old directors, in the nights of these later days, I wonder, or is it as quiet as this degenerate Aceldama of an Old Bailey?

To walk on to the Bank, lamenting the good old times and bemoaning the present evil period, would be an easy next step, so I would take it, and would make my houseless circuit of the Bank, and give a thought to the treasure within; likewise to the guard of soldiers passing the night there, and nodding over the fire. Next, I went to Billingsgate, in some hope of market-people, but, it proving as yet too early, crossed London-bridge and got down by the water-side on the Surrey shore among the buildings of the great brewery. There was plenty going on at the brewery; and the reek, and the smell of grains, and the rattling of the plump dray horses at their mangers, were capital company. Quite refreshed by having mingled with this good society, I made a new start with a new heart, setting the old King's Bench prison before me for my next object, and resolving, when I should come to the wall, to think of poor Horace Kinch, and the Dry Rot in men.

A very curious disease the Dry Rot in men, and difficult to detect the beginning of. It had carried Horace Kinch inside the wall of the old King's Bench prison, and it had carried him out with his feet foremost. He was a likely man to look at, in the prime of life, well to do, as clever as he needed to be, and popular among many friends. He was suitably married, and had healthy and pretty children. But, like some fair-looking houses or fair-looking ships, he took the Dry Rot. The first strong external revelation of the Dry Rot in men, is a tendency to lurk and lounge; to be at street-corners without intelligible reason; to be going anywhere when met; to be about many places rather than at any; to do nothing tangible, but to have an intention of performing a variety of intangible duties to-morrow or the day after. When this manifestation of the disease is observed, the observer will usually connect it with a vague impression once formed or received, that the patient was living a little too hard. He will scarcely have had leisure to turn it over in his mind and form the terrible suspicion "Dry

Rot," when he will notice a change for the worse in the patient's appearance: a certain slovenliness and deterioration, which is not poverty, nor dirt, nor intoxication, nor ill-health, but simply Dry Rot. To this, succeeds a smell as of strong waters, in the morning; to that, a looseness respecting money; to that, a stronger smell as of strong waters, at all times; to that, a looseness respecting everything; to that, a trembling of the limbs, somnolency, misery, and crumbling to pieces. As it is in wood, so it is in men. Dry Rot advances at a compound usury quite incalculable. A plank is found infected with it, and the whole structure is devoted. Thus it had been with the unhappy Horace Kinch, lately buried by a small subscription. Those who knew him had not nigh done saying, "So well off, so comfortably established, with such hope before him—and yet, it is feared, with a slight touch of Dry Rot!" when lo! the man was all Dry Rot and dust.

From the dead wall associated on those houseless nights with this too common story, I chose next to wander by Bethlehem Hospital; partly because it lay on my road round to Westminster; partly, because I had a night-fancy in my head which could be best pursued within sight of its walls and dome. And the fancy was this: Are not the sane and the insane equal at night as the sane lie dreaming? Are not all of us outside this hospital, who dream, more or less in the condition of those inside it, every night of our lives? Are we not nightly persuaded, as they daily are, that we associate preposterously with kings and queens, emperors and empresses, and notabilities of all sorts? Do we not nightly jumble events and personages and times and places, as these do daily? Are we not sometimes troubled by our own sleeping inconsistencies, and do we not vexedly try to account for them or excuse them, just as these do sometimes in respect of their waking delusions? Said an afflicted man to me, when I was last in a hospital like this, "Sir, I can frequently fly." I was half ashamed to reflect that so could I—by night. Said a woman to me on the same occasion, "Queen Victoria frequently comes to dine with me, and her Majesty and I dine off peaches and macaroni in our night-gowns, and his Royal Highness the Prince Consort does us the honour to make a third on horseback in a Field-Marshal's uniform." Could I refrain from reddening with consciousness when I remembered the amazing royal parties I myself had given (at night), the unaccountable viands I had put on table, and my extraordinary manner of conducting myself on those distinguished occasions? I wonder that the great master who knew everything, when he called Sleep the death of each day's life, did not call Dreams the insanity of each day's sanity.

By this time I had left the Hospital behind me, and was again setting towards the river; and in a short breathing space I was on Westminster-bridge, regaling my houseless eyes with the external walls of the British Parliament—the perfection of a stupendous institution, I

know, and the admiration of all surrounding nations and succeeding ages, I do not doubt, but perhaps a little the better now and then for being pricked up to its work. Turning off into Old Palace-yard, the Courts of Law kept me company for a quarter of an hour; hinting in low whispers what numbers of people they were keeping awake, and how intensely wretched and horrible they were rendering the small hours to unfortunate suitors. Westminster Abbey was fine gloomy society for another quarter of an hour; suggesting a wonderful procession of its dead among the dark arches and pillars, each century more amazed by the century following it than by all the centuries going before. And indeed in those houseless night walks—which even included cemeteries where watchmen went round among the graves at stated times, and moved the tell-tale handle of an index which recorded that they had touched it at such an hour—it was a solemn consideration what enormous hosts of dead belong to one old great city, and how, if they were raised while the living slept, there would not be the space of a pin's point in all the streets and ways for the living to come out into. Not only that, but the vast armies of dead would overflow the hills and valleys beyond the city, and would stretch away all round it, God knows how far: seemingly, to the confines of the earth.

When a church clock strikes, on houseless ears in the dead of the night, it may be at first mistaken for company and hailed as such. But, as the spreading circles of vibration, which you may perceive at such a time with great clearness, go opening out, for ever and ever afterwards widening perhaps (as the philosopher has suggested) in eternal space, the mistake is rectified and the sense of loneliness is profounder. Once—it was after leaving the Abbey and turning my face north—I came to the great steps of Saint Martin's church as the clock was striking Three. Suddenly, a thing that in a moment more I should have trodden upon without seeing, rose up at my feet with a cry of loneliness and houselessness, struck out of it by the bell, the like of which I never heard. We then stood face to face looking at one another, frightened by one another. The creature was like a beetle-browed hair-lipped youth of twenty, and it had a loose bundle of rags on, which it held together with one of its hands. It shivered from head to foot, and its teeth chattered, and as it stared at me—persecutor, devil, ghost, whatever it thought me—it made with its whining mouth as if it were snapping at me, like a worried dog. Intending to give this ugly object, money, I put out my hand to stay it—for it recoiled as it whined and snapped—and laid my hand upon its shoulder. Instantly, it twisted out of its garment, like the young man in the New Testament, and left me standing alone with its rags in my hand.

Covent-garden Market, when it was market morning, was wonderful company. The great waggons of cabbages, with growers' men and boys lying asleep under them, and with sharp

dogs from market-garden neighbourhoods looking after the whole, were as good as a party. But one of the worst night sights I know in London, is to be found in the children who prowl about this place; who sleep in the baskets, fight for the offal, dart at any object they think they can lay their thieving hands on, dive under the carts and barrows, dodge the constables, and are perpetually making a blunt pattering on the pavement of the Piazza with the rain of their naked feet. A painful and unnatural result comes of the comparison one is forced to institute between the growth of corruption as displayed in the so much improved and cared for fruits of the earth, and the growth of corruption as displayed in these all uncared for (except inasmuch as ever-hunted) savages.

There was early coffee to be got about Covent-garden Market, and that was more company—warm company, too, which was better. Toast of a very substantial quality, was likewise procurable: though the towzled-headed man who made it, in an inner chamber within the coffee room, hadn't got his coat on yet, and was so heavy with sleep that in every interval of toast and coffee he went off anew behind the partition into complicated cross-roads of choke and snore, and lost his way directly. Into one of these establishments (among the earliest) near Bow-street, there came, one morning as I sat over my houseless cup, pondering where to go next, a man in a high and long snuff-coloured coat, and shoes, and, to the best of my belief, nothing else but a hat, who took out of his hat a large cold meat pudding; a meat pudding so large that it was a very tight fit, and brought the lining of the hat out with it. This mysterious man was known by his pudding, for, on his entering, the man of sleep brought him a pint of hot tea, a small loaf, and a large knife and fork and plate. Left to himself in his box, he stood the pudding on the bare table, and, instead of cutting it, stabbed it, over-hand, with the knife, like a mortal enemy; then took the knife out, wiped it on his sleeve, tore the pudding asunder with his fingers, and ate it all up. The remembrance of this man with the pudding remains with me as the remembrance of the most spectral person my houselessness encountered. Twice only was I in that establishment, and twice I saw him stalk in (as I should say, just out of bed, and presently going back to bed), take out his pudding, stab his pudding, wipe the dagger, and eat his pudding all up. He was a man whose figure promised cadaverousness, but who had an excessively red face, though shaped like a horse's. On the second occasion of my seeing him, he said, huskily, to the man of sleep, "Am I red to-night?" "You are," he uncompromisingly answered. "My mother," said the spectre, "was a red-faced woman that liked drink, and I looked at her hard when she laid in her coffin, and I took the complexion." Somehow, the pudding seemed an unwholesome pudding after that, and I put myself in its way no more.

When there was no market, or when I wanted

variety, a railway terminus with the morning mails coming in, was remunerative company. But like most of the company to be had in this world, it lasted only a very short time. The station lamps would burst out ablaze, the porters would emerge from places of concealment, the cabs and trucks would rattle to their places (the post-office carts were already in theirs), and, finally, the bell would strike up, and the train would come banging in. But there were few passengers and little luggage, and everything scuttled away with the greatest expedition. The locomotive post-offices, with their great nets—as if they had been dragging the country for bodies—would fly open as to their doors, and would disgorge a smell of lamp, an exhausted clerk, a guard in a red coat, and their bags of letters; the engine would blow and heave and perspire, like an engine wiping its forehead and saying what a run it had had; and within ten minutes the lamps were out, and I was houseless and alone again.

But now, there were driven cattle on the high road near, wanting (as cattle always do) to turn into the midst of stone walls, and squeeze themselves through six inches' width of iron railing, and getting their heads down (also as cattle always do) for tossing-purchase at quite imaginary dogs, and giving themselves and every devoted creature associated with them a most extraordinary amount of unnecessary trouble. Now, too, the conscious gas began to grow pale with the knowledge that daylight was coming, and straggling work-people were already in the streets, and, as waking life had become extinguished with the last pieman's sparks, so it began to be rekindled with the fires of the first street corner breakfast-sellers. And so by faster and faster degrees, until the last degrees were very fast, the day came, and I was tired and could sleep. And it is not, as I used to think, going home at such times, the least wonderful thing in London, that in the real desert region of the night the houseless wanderer is alone there. I knew well enough where to find Vice and Misfortune of all kinds, if I had chosen; but they were put out of sight, and my houselessness had many miles upon miles of streets in which it could, and did, have its own solitary way.

OUR EYE-WITNESS "SITTING AT A PLAY."

THE Eye-witness has had the good fortune to discover, blushing, unseen, in a country town, a drama of surpassing interest, abounding in situations, in tableaux, and (as will be seen by the bill) in thrilling combats, and withal new and fresh in plot and construction. He was first struck of a heap, and then drawn into the Thamesend Theatre by a playbill in the pork-butcher's window. It was pinned on a very fat leg of pork, and ran thus:

THEATRE, THAMESEND.

For the
BENEFIT OF

M^r. RUPERT RAVENSWOOD,

On Friday, September 30.

The performances will commence with a Drama of intense interest, abounding with thrilling Combats, entitled the

BRIDGE & DESPAIR.

Mons. Dumague.....MR. SIMS.
Capt. Lafont.....MR. HICKSON.
Mons. Girard.....MR. PERRY.
Pierre Bertrand.....MR. SCROPE.
Phillips Fypon.....MR. T. SIMS.
Paul Gerrole.....MR. G. SIMS.
MICHEL (the Dumb Guide).....MR. R. RAVENSWOOD.
Jacques Labomme.....MR. F. SIMS.
Marcel.....MR. Q. SIMS.
Madame Minot.....MRS. SIMS.
Jeannette.....MISS SIMS.
Adelle.....MISS SABINA SIMS.

Pierre Bertrand's Inn.

The lilly (!) of France—the happy vintage and abode of love—Adelle's goodness the theme of her moral neighbours—she welcomes them to the village festival—this day must be devoted to feasting and merriment! but one is wanting to complete the joyous assembly, and that one is MICHEL, THE DUMB GUIDE—the consent given to Adelle's marriage with Michel is overheard by Paul Gerrole—he vows his love and is rejected—his vow of revenge—arrival of Michel and Captain Lafont—the letters entrusted to Adelle—Gerrole changes the pistols—the lover's farewell and departure.

Gerrole and Marcel in ambush—the road intercepted—the attack—the pistols false, and

DEATH OF CAPTAIN LAFONT.

The dumb guide's despair—Michel beats down Marcel who is wounded—Gerrole returns to the conflict—

TERRIFIC COMBAT & 3

Michel is overpowered and beaten to the earth—escape of Marcel and Gerrole—entrance of the military—

MICHEL ACCUSED OF MURDER!

Grand and Impressive Tableau!

THE TRIAL!!

Evidence strong against Michel—the discharged pistol—sudden appearance of Gerrole who swears that the knife and pistol now produced, stained with blood, were the property of Michel—affecting meeting of the Lovers

Wretched Michel

THY DOOM IS A GIBBET.

THE BRIDGE & DESPAIR

Over the Victim's Grave—Tableau.

CROSS OF DEATH!

The once merry Pierre, the father of
ADELLE A MANIAC!

He sinks in prayer at the foot of the cross—Marcel and Gerrole in search for the

MISSING PISTOL!!

That pistol which if found by another would expose them to the world as the monsters (!) nature had created them—Gerrole sees Pierre, his horror and remorse

THE BLOOD OF HIS VICTIM IS FRESH UPON THE
STONE CROSS

Pierre and the pistol—yield it old man! never! a light breaks in upon me

YOU ARE A MURDERER.

And poor dumb Michel may yet be saved! Help!! Help!!!

DEADLY STRUGGLE—arrival of the military—the discovery and

Death of Paul Gerrole

TABLEAU.

The Theatre at Thamesend is not so large as Exeter Hall. It is not so large as the Adelphi, or the St. James's, or Miss Kelly's. In short, it is as small as it well can be, and the stage—though larger than that of the Smallport Theatre, where the proscenium was so low that your Eye-witness could only see the face of the tallest actor from the mouth downward—the stage is of such confined dimensions that, when a scene has to be set in front of another, the performers have a hard matter to keep their legs out of the foot-lights, and look as if the background must inevitably end in pushing them over into the pit.

But what matters size? The Thamesend Theatre was beautifully decorated, with the whole solar system on the ceiling complete, except in one place, where there was a great round hole, which looked as if one of the larger planets had been unable to stand it any longer, and had bolted out into space. There were twenty-seven persons present on this occasion (after half-price), and the boy who, wanting to pass from one part of the gallery to another, achieved his object by a hand-over-hand process round the rail of that portion of the building, must have done so out of pure fancy, as he might easily, if he had thought proper, have stepped over the benches, on which his friends were but sparsely scattered. As for the audience, it was mainly composed of young Thamesend swells, who all tried to imitate each other in their costume and manners, taking their lead from the young man at Hicks and Vicars's, who on the previous day had served the E.-W. with that box of dinner pills to which he attributes the gradual break-up of his digestive powers. The young man from Hicks and Vicars's tried hard to be languid, and not interested in the performance, but the "thrilling combats" proved too many for him, and in the course of the progress of the drama he became violently and breathlessly excited.

And well he might. For, to be sure, this was a play which, even without the thrilling combats, might reasonably awaken the interest of anybody. Let us consider it carefully. The reader has already seen that this drama commences with "the lily of France—the happy vintage and abode of love," and that "Adelle's goodness is the theme of her moral neighbours;" he has seen that lily is (and why not?) spelt with two l's, and he has observed that the name of Adèle is similarly favoured with a redundancy of letters. All this he has seen, but there are other things which he has *not* seen. He has not seen the moral neighbours, and it is well for him. The first blow has been struck at the morality of the Eye-witness; the thin end of the immoral wedge has—so to speak—been introduced, by the sight of those moral neighbours, of their dirt, their discouraging seediness, and (especially with regard to the main spokesman) their intemperance. Indeed, the principal moral neighbour was supported from behind by his friends, and delivered his dialogue with a glazed eye and an impaired and gully utterance.

But if the reader (and his morality) has gained by not having seen the moral neighbours, he has greatly lost in having missed "Adelle's" father, the merry Pierre. This young person was blessed with a perennial youth, which set at defiance the elastic cotton baldness which had been pulled on by different dirty fingers, till it was relieved by a black line from his face. He was evidently the youngest member of the company, and as Adelle herself was a stout matron of about forty, and her lovers were both stalwart veterans, the aspect of affairs was remarkable. The miscreant Gerrole having failed to induce this youth to grant him his daughter's hand in marriage, vows vengeance, as will be seen by reference to the bill, and soon gets an opportunity of wreaking it. Enter Captain Lafont, who being a pedestrian traveller, and in want of a guide, is of course dressed in a military frock, cotton drawers, and Hessians. He wears a cap with a gold band, carries a riding-whip to help him across the mountains, and is further prepared for a scramble by having on his heels an immense pair of gilt spurs. The faithful Michel steps forward, appropriately accoutred for an Alpine journey in a blouse, an open shirt-collar, white trousers, and pumps with buckles in them.

Now, the faithful Michel, being the accepted lover of Adelle, is obnoxious in the eyes of the wicked Gerrole; so he at once determines to waylay the travellers, and by murdering them both to get rid of his rival, and at the same time to become possessed of the wardrobe of the officer, Captain Lafont. The wicked Gerrole now associates in his villany the miscreant Marcel, and they both get into ambush on a spot which the traveller and his guide will infallibly pass, and this is the process called intercepting the road. This getting into ambush is a matter of great difficulty, and is not accomplished without much noisy stamping about and profuse gesticulation. It is at last, however, tolerably successful, considering the smallness of the "cover" and the largeness of the performers; the murderers are made all snug, the thunder and lightning begins, and the Dumb Guide and Captain Lafont appear on the scene. They descend the rocks at the back, and it then becomes evident, that, as far as being a guide is concerned, the faithful Michel is an impostor. He gropes about, advances to the second entrance left, and, being received there by a flash of lightning, tries the third entrance right. Finding that this will not do either, he retires to the back of the stage, raises himself on tiptoe, and kisses his hand, looking, as stage directions say, "off." Having performed this feat at the back of the stage, he next comes to the front and repeats it; other equally intelligible pieces of pantomime would, doubtless, have followed, if Messrs. Marcel and Gerrole had not suddenly burst out of their ambush and attacked the Captain; who was sitting all this time helplessly on a big stone.

The faithful Michel rushes to the rescue, but to his dismay finds that his pistols, which Marcel

had previously tampered with, miss fire. The murderers kill the Captain; but, having done this, appear inclined to behave very handsomely to the Dumb Guide, for, instead of despatching him on the spot, they retire to opposite corners, and commence a series of gesticulations highly valuable as callisthenic exercises, but liable to the objection of involving a great loss of time and opportunity. While they are thus engaged, the Dumb Guide retires up the stage, and, happening to look behind a large stone cross, suddenly discovers a couple of serviceable swords of the kind called "combats." This is one of those touches of nature which carry an audience by storm. The swords having thus turned up in the nick of time, a thrilling combat of three comes off without further delay. It is a beautiful combat. The Dumb Guide, with one of the opportunely discovered swords in each hand, tackles both his enemies at once, and accommodates them with every kind of up stroke and down stroke, of over stroke and under stroke, and all sorts of fancy strokes, keeping time to the music all the while. Such an honourable combat, too: when anybody gets out of breath the others leave off, and wait till he has got his wind before they set to work again. The combat went on so long, and the audience approved of it so highly, that your Eye-witness began to think that this drama was not only to "abound" in thrilling combats, but was going to be a thrilling combat altogether, when a discovery was made by Messrs. Marcel and Gerrole that the military was approaching in the distance. This circumstance altered the posture of affairs, and caused these two gentlemen to decamp very promptly, so it happened that the Dumb Guide was left on the stage alone with the remains, and in this position was discovered by the military. "The military" consisted of two boys and a girl, but such is the force of allegiance in the Dumb Guide, that when this small force (selected, apparently, from a large one, if one might judge from the diversity of its uniforms) charged him with the murder of the Captain, he gave in at once, and suffered himself to be led away, like a lamb, to the hall of justice.

The hall of justice is a small apartment enough, with two arm-chairs placed sideways to the audience, and in front of one of them a small desk with hangings to conceal its legs, which are probably of deal. There is no one on the stage when this scene is discovered, which makes its awfulness the more impressive. In course of time, however, an elderly gentleman in a black coat and the late Captain's Hessians (which, alas! he will want no longer), enters, and is immediately recognisable as the principal moral neighbour who appeared at the beginning of the drama, and who was then, or appearances did him great injustice, to a certain extent under the influence of cordial waters. This gentleman, who has not lost the vitreous eye or the vacillating roll which characterised him earlier in the evening, takes the stage once or twice, advances to the foot-lights, and looks as if he were going to say something, but after

certain workings of the under jaw which are unproductive of sound, thinks better of it, and retires to one of the arm-chairs, into which he sinks rather heavily, but with great majesty notwithstanding. This achievement is followed by the entry of a very tall young man indeed in a very short clergyman's gown, who skims across the stage in so rapid a manner as to suggest that he is ashamed of his legs, which, indeed, are calculated to cover him with confusion; he gets them, however, promptly under the hangings of the desk, and breathes once more. It is evident that these are the two judges who are to try the prisoner, and as it is also obvious that they either don't know their dialogue, or have got no dialogue to know, it is quite a relief when the military bring in the prisoner through the folding-doors in the flat, and when other myrmidons of justice enter, escorting the fainting Adelle, there seems a reasonable prospect of a commencement of the proceedings.

The proceedings, then, are opened by the young Justice, with the disheartening legs, who charges Michel with the murder of the Deputy-Lieutenant. It might be expected that the military would now come forward as witnesses, but they remain speechless, and the young Justice gives their evidence for them. This is the case for the prosecution, and, as there is no counsel on either side, it is uncommonly soon over. So is the speech of the unfortunate Adelle, who in vain endeavours to show that her own personal conviction of the prisoner's innocence is sufficient ground for his discharge. There remains, then, but one more chance for the unfortunate Michel: his own defence, which is to be conducted in dumb show.

The once-moral-neighbour-now-Justice-of-the-Peace gives the signal to begin, and the dumb man goes at it with a will. It is quite certain that when the dumb man softly strides across the justice-hall (which is soon done), and, rising on his toes, looks up to heaven, then strides back again and points down to the ground, and, subsequently advancing into the middle of the stage, kneels on one knee and smites his breast—it is quite certain, we say, that it would never occur to the reader to explain these phenomena in the following manner:

"It will be obvious," says the Irish J.P.—"it will be obvious to all persons of ordinary intelligence and perspicuity, that the meaning of the prisoner in this introductory portion of his evidence is as follows: he says that 'twas about the evening toime, when a strenger, arrovving in the village, demanded some person to act as a gyuide in conveying him across the adjeecent mountains. Prisoner, am I jostified in thus interpreting your signs?"

The dumb man, laying his hand upon his heart, smiles a smile for which alone he ought to be ordered for immediate execution. The J.P. turns with mingled exultation and drowsiness to his colleague, the young man with the discouraging legs and the short gown, who now takes no part in the proceedings beyond insanelly fiddling with a pen, and says, "I was

roight. Prisoner, ye may now proceed with your ividence."

The dumb man, who desires nothing better, is at it again in no time. He strides again across the justice-room, and again rises on his toes, then he slightly ducks at the knee-joints, then he crosses again and clasps his hands, then he strides to the folding-doors and looks out of them, then he hides his face with his hands, then he returns to the middle of the stage, smiles, goes down on one knee, kisses his hand, and slaps his breast.

"I gather," says the J.P., "from what I have just seen, that he started on his journey in company with the streenger, who wore a military appearance, and had a sloit east in the oi. The sun was descending upon, or rather behoind, the earth, and the little birds were singing their matins to the decloining orb, when suddenly on approaching that part of the road in which necessitee compelled them to pass over the bridge now known by the sad appelection of the Bridge of Despair, a terrific storm burst upon the travellers, and at the same toime they were assaulted by two hardened ruffians, destitute aloike of human sympathy and of a due regyord for the awful majistee of the tempest which was uxploding upon 'um. Prisoner, you may proceed with your ividence."

More soft striding, more rising on tiptoe, more kissing of fingers, more kneeling on one knee, more slapping of breast.

The J.P., who had been asleep, is at this particular moment not equal to the occasion, and the dumb man prompting the judge, "throws a whisper" at him with all his might.

"Oh! ah! yes! a thrilling combat ensued," said the Justice, "a combat of a terrific neature, between three desperate men; for the fourth, the unhappy streenger, had fallen at once a victim to the blows of the assassin. Prisoner, ye may proceed."

Dumb show as before, and prompting continued to the end.

"It was about this toime," continued the Justice, stimulated by much whispering from the dumb man—"it was about this toime that the military—the brave defenders of our neetive roights and libertees—came upon the scene, when the murderers, alarmed by the majistee of their appearance, fled from before them, and the accused being found near to the remeens of the unhappy and murdered voyager, was accused of the foul deed, and brought to justice." As there is no jury to charge, and nobody to be consulted, there seems every reason at this juncture to conclude that the trial is at an end, when suddenly Messrs. Marcel and Gerrole rush into court, and, producing the pistol with which the murder is alleged to have been committed, prove it to be the property of the devoted Michel. Michel is ordered for execution, and, being removed by the military, the stage is cleared.

The Bridge of Despair scene again, and "the once merry Pierre, the father of Adelle—a maniac!" It is a curious and instructive thing

to observe in what a subtle manner the mental derangement of the once merry Pierre is suggested to the audience. It is entirely done by the agency of glazed calico. It seems, to judge by appearances, that the father of Adelle, on parting with his reason and ceasing to be the once merry Pierre, has purchased, or otherwise become possessed of, a long "breadth" of black glazed calico; in this he has cut a hole for his venerable head, and has popped it on over his ordinary clothing. The effect of this is much more horrible, and certainly more indicative of insanity, than anything else that could have been done at the price. Habited thus, the old gentleman is discovered groping about in search of a certain missing pistol which is to clear his future son-in-law's character. The weapon in question turns up behind the stone cross, where on a previous occasion it will be remembered that two swords happened to be discovered just when they were wanted.

The Eye-witness frankly acknowledges he is not in a position to inform the reader how the discovery of this pistol cleared the character of the Dumb Guide; or why Messrs. Marcel and Gerrole, who knew that it would do so, and who came upon the scene just as the once merry Pierre found it, did not knock the maniac father on the head, wrap him up in the breadth of glazed calico, and tumble him over the Bridge of Despair into the raging torrent below. Far less can he explain how it happened that the military turned up again at this moment; that the Irish J.P. happened to be passing when he was most wanted, to convict the two villains; that Adelle knew all about it, and bounded on, followed by the Dumb Guide, who had been probably liberated by electric telegraph: so rapidly did his appearance follow the discovery of his innocence. At all events, accountable or unaccountable, all these things were so, and the maniac father, whose restoration was all that was wanting to make everything satisfactory, acted *like* a father, and, abandoning his glazed calico and his lunacy together, became the once merry Pierre again, and lived so ever afterwards.

VIDOCQ, FRENCH DETECTIVE.

IN TWO PORTIONS. PORTION THE SECOND.

THE second anecdote illustrative of the great French detective's cleverness, runs as follows:

At the time of the first invasion of France by the Allies, as the disinterested conduct of the enemy was not a perfectly established fact, everybody set to work to invent hiding-places for valuables, out of the reach of Cossack rapacity. A Monsieur Sénard, a jeweller in the Palais Royal, on going to visit one of his friends, the Curé of Livry, near Pontoise, found him busily employed in having a hole dug in which he might temporarily bury, in the first place, the church plate, and, secondly, his own little property. The man who was digging the hole had enjoyed the curé's confidence for thirty years; he was a cooper by trade; he was also churchwarden,

sacristan, bell-ringer, and factotum. Never during the whole course of his life had old Moiselet given the slightest ground for suspicion, either with respect to his devotion or his morality.

M. Sénard conceived the idea of taking advantage of the good curé's hiding-place to ensure the safety of three hundred thousand francs' worth (12,000*l.*) of diamonds, which he brought the next morning in a little box. The joint treasure was deposited in the ground six feet deep, covered and concealed in such a way as to throw any curious inquirer off the scent. The Cossacks did not fail to pay a visit to Livry and its environs, where they made a few discoveries; but, thanks to old Moiselet's ingenuity, the precious deposit escaped their cupidity.

The good curé rubbed his hands, and congratulated himself on his innocent trick, when one fine day—it ought to have been a Friday—Moiselet rushed in more dead than alive, and announced that the treasure had been abstracted. Both rushed to the spot. All they gained from their inspection of it was the wretched certainty that the robbery was complete; the rascally Cossacks had not done things by halves; the heretics, the pagans! They had carried off all, even the sacred vessels. The poor curé nearly fell backwards when he beheld the full extent of his loss; Moiselet, for his part, was frightful to look at; he sighed and groaned as if he were giving up the ghost. This dreadful misfortune could not have afflicted him more keenly had it been his own personal loss. The violence of his grief prevented his accompanying Monsieur le Curé, who took the first vehicle to acquaint his friend Sénard with the terrible news.

Sénard cleared the distance between the Palais Royal and the Préfecture of Police at a single bound. He did not scruple to lay the theft of the treasure on the shoulders of the very person who had hidden it: on the smooth-spoken, the pious, the afflicted old Moiselet. M. Henry was of the same opinion, in spite of all the curé could say to testify to his sacristan's honour; also was it Vidocq's opinion, at the first word he heard about the business; but mentioned that the affair was beset with thorns. Yet, he would undertake it, and did not despair of coming off with flying colours.

"Incur," said M. Sénard, "whatever expense you think necessary. My purse is at your disposal, and I am ready to make any sacrifice. Only find me my box of diamonds, and there are ten thousand francs for you."

In spite of M. Sénard's successive abatements in proportion as the discovery seemed more probable, Vidocq promised to do everything in his power. M. Sénard and the curé returned to Pontoise, and the result of their depositions was the arrest and examination of Moiselet. They tried him in all ways to get him to confess his guilt, but he persisted in declaring his innocence; and the accusation was on the point of melting into air, when

Vidocq set one of his cleverest agents to work. This person, wearing a military uniform and with his left arm in a sling, presented himself to Moiselet's wife, with a billet for lodgings. He was supposed to be just discharged from the hospital, and that it had been his intention to remain at Livry only eight-and-forty hours; but a few minutes after his arrival, he had a fall, and an artificial sprain, which prevented the possibility of his continuing his journey. The mayor, therefore, decided that he should be the cooperess's guest till further orders.

Madame Moiselet was one of those hearty jovial bodies who have no scruple about living under the same roof with a wounded conscript; and she was not yet thirty-six. Moreover, evil tongues reproached her with a weakness for a cheerful glass. The pretended soldier did not fail to flatter every foible through which she was accessible, even opening his purse to pay for her bottles of wine. He acted as her secretary, and wrote letters at her dictation to her husband in prison. He practised on her vanity and love of show, by sending a female pedlar to tempt her with gaudy goods, which might perhaps draw some of the curé's cash out of its hidden retreat, or bring forward some of the church plate by way of exchange; but all in vain. Madame Moiselet was discretion itself; she was a phoenix of prudence. Her guarded resistance put Vidocq on his mettle; he ordered the agent to cure his sprain and come back immediately, and resolved to experimentalise in person on the husband.

Disguised as a sort of German man-servant, and without having given the least previous notice to the local authorities, Vidocq began prowling about the environs of Pontoise, with the intention of getting himself taken up. Nothing in the world was more easy for him to manage; he had so often given gendarmes the dodge that he knew perfectly well how to fall into their clutches. As he had no papers or passport to show, and as the commissary of police could not understand a word of his gibberish, the prison doors opened to receive him, almost of their own accord. As soon as he was introduced into the prison yard, he recognised Moiselet. Feigning to find his countenance more agreeable and engaging than the faces of the other prisoners, he made him understand, rather by gestures than by words, that he wished to treat him to a bottle of wine, by way of paying his footing. Moiselet conducted him to his chamber, and the bottles were emptied one after the other. Vidocq pretended to be dead drunk; so that the gaoler, who took part in the libations, very naturally set up a bed for him in his new friend's room. It was all he wanted, for the present. Moiselet was delighted; besides the slight gratification of personal pride which a professed drinker feels when he has put a rival under the table, he found Vidocq an amiable and a generous companion.

When the two first bottles were paid for, Vidocq, unstitching a button off his coat, had extracted from it a Napoleon. Next morn-

ing, Moiselet inquired if he had any more? Vidocq made him understand that every one of his buttons was garnished with the same lining, with the exception that the large buttons contained double Napoleons, while the small buttons had only single ones. The old sacristan jumped for joy; he had no money, or, if he had, it did not suit his purpose to show it. He was charmed at finding a comrade who prodigally met their common expenses, without asking for anything in return beyond the pleasure of his company. In the impossibility of persuading his amiable guest to speak French, Moiselet attempted to speak what, on the stage, passes by courtesy for broken German. It was in this frightful jargon, enough to disconcert a Frankfort Jew, that Vidocq, without a great deal of persuasion, related his story, framed for the circumstances.

Although the narrative did not sin by excess of lucidity, Moiselet easily comprehended that his new friend had, at the battle of Montereau, stolen his master's portmanteau and concealed it in the Forest of Bondy; and as the confession did not appear either to astonish him or to shock his feelings, Vidocq came to the conclusion that his friend's conscience was tolerably lax and wide, and no longer doubted that he knew better than anybody else what had become of the curé's little property, the sacred vessels, and M. Sénard's diamonds. He began to vaunt the pleasant life that was led on the other side of the Rhine, the beauty of the women, and the excellence of the wines. He got him to express the desire he felt of going to Germany, as soon as he had recovered his liberty.

Persuaded from that moment that his companion, at his time of life, would not entertain such a project unless he knew where to procure money, Vidocq wrote to the Procureur du Roi, made himself known as the Head of the Police de Sûreté, and begged him to order that he should be removed with Moiselet under the pretence of being transferred, the one to Livry, the other to Paris. As may be supposed, the order had not long to be waited for.

They were bound with only a very thin rope; on the road Moiselet made signs that it would be easy to break it. The further they travelled, the more he gave Vidocq to understand that in him lay his only hope of safety; every minute he repeated his earnest entreaty not to be left behind, while Vidocq reassured him, by answering ambiguously, "Ja, friend Frenchman. Ja, I not leave you; I not let you go alone."

At last, the decisive moment arrived; the rope was broken, and Vidocq cleared the ditch which separated the road from the underwood of the forest. Moiselet, who had recovered the legs of his youth, rushed after him. One of the gendarmes dismounted to pursue them; but how was it possible, even with all the good will in the world, to run, and above all to jump, in jack-boots and with a heavy sabre? Whilst the gendarme made a circuit to intercept his prisoners, they disappeared in the thicket and were soon out of reach.

They followed a path which led them to the wood of Vanjours. There, Moiselet halted; and after looking carefully around, directed his steps towards a thicket of bushes. He then stooped, thrust his arm into one of the densest tufts, and drew out of it a spade. He rose abruptly, advanced several paces without uttering a word, and when they came to a birch-tree, several twigs of which had been snapped short, he took off his hat and coat, and set to work to dig with all his might and main. He laboured with such hearty good will that his task progressed rapidly. All of a sudden he threw himself back, uttering a long-drawn sigh of satisfaction, which told his companion that, without the aid of the diviner's wand, he had succeeded in discovering a treasure. The cooper seemed on the point of fainting from excess of joy; but he speedily recovered himself. The removal of two or three more shovelfuls of earth exposed the box to view; he laid hold of it and pulled it out. While so doing, Vidocq seized the instrument of discovery, and, suddenly changing his tone, declared that the emigrant to Germany was his prisoner.

"If you make the slightest resistance," he said, "I will dash your brains out."

At this threat, Moiselet thought he was dreaming; but when he felt himself in the grasp of that iron hand which had grappled with the most desperate ruffians, he must have been convinced that it was no dream, but a terrible reality. He became as gentle as a lamb; Vidocq had promised not to desert him, and he kept his word. During his walk to the gendarmes' station-house, he kept exclaiming, over and over again, "I am a ruined man! Who would have thought it? He seemed such a harmless sort of fellow! Who would have thought it?"

Moiselet was tried at the *Versailles Assizes*, and was condemned to six years' reclusion.

M. Sénard was delighted beyond measure at the recovery of his three hundred thousand francs' worth of diamonds; but, faithful to his downward sliding-scale, he cut down the reward to one half, and even then Vidocq had a hard task to get him to pay in cash the five thousand francs, out of which he had expended more than two. At one time, he was afraid that he would have to suffer the loss for his pains.

Note here, that Vidocq never attempted to conceal this trifling perquisite of three thousand francs, any more than he did other extra gratuities. Similar additions to his income were by no means rare, and they serve to explain quite satisfactorily, how, with a fixed salary of only five thousand francs a year, he quitted office, after having held it for eighteen years, with something like a little fortune.

Such was Vidocq's activity, that the numerous operations of the Brigade of Safety were for him insufficient occupation. Towards the close of the Empire, he opened in the Place de Grève, near Saint-Jean's turnstile, a distillery, or gin-shop, where his faithful Annette was enthroned, and where he himself did not disdain to take his seat occasionally. It was an excellent post for

observation. What is curious, is, that professional thieves frequented his establishment in preference to others. They thought it a good joke to go and take a dram at Vidocq's, and with him, whenever he happened to be there. For three or four years, under the Restoration, he set up a regular office for providing military substitutes in the Petite Rue Sainte-Anne, which is said to have brought him in fifty or sixty thousand francs. He had already placed his talents at the service of private individuals whilst he was supposed to be devoting the whole of his time to the public administration. Inquiries touching the interests of families; hunting up debtors; the surveillance of married and unmarried women, sometimes also the surveillance of husbands; operations more or less available, but assuredly quite foreign to his duties; he undertook everything which, if it did not concern his office, had any remotely apparent connexion with it. The reputation for intelligence and activity which he had deservedly acquired at the head of his brigade, caused the highest families unhesitatingly to apply to him under the most delicate circumstances, and most frequently left him at liberty to fix the price of his services. If, therefore, according to his enemies' account, he left the Préfecture of Police with sixteen or twenty thousand pounds sterling in his pocket, we have no right to shout after him "Stop thief!"

Vidocq's men, as well as himself, were continually subject to be snubbed by the respectable public. One of his subordinates, who had long been on the alert after a couple of adroit female thieves, at last saw them accost an elderly gentleman, whom they relieved of his purse after a few minutes' conversation. When the theft had been committed, the agent contrived to learn from the women (who were not aware of his quality) what were the contents of the purse, and appointed a rendezvous to meet them again, without losing sight of their victim, whom he followed into a café in the Rue Saint-Honoré.

"Monsieur," he said to the old gentleman, "when you left home, you had a green silk purse?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Which contained fifty Napoleons?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"You have just been robbed of it."

"That is only too true, monsieur," replied the old gentleman, after having felt in all his pockets.

"Well, monsieur, if you will follow me, you shall regain your purse, and the two women who robbed you shall be arrested."

"You are a spy, it would seem," the old man observed.

"I am an agent of the Police of Surety."

"Well, Monsieur Spy, I don't choose to go with you. For my own part, I prefer to be robbed; it suits my taste. What have you to say to that?"

The agent, who did not expect an answer of that kind, retreated from the café, as cowed as a fox that had been caught by a goose.

Vidocq's maxim was, that to keep an eye on robbers to any good purpose, it was necessary to frequent their society. Even when his position as Chief of the Police of Surety was no longer a secret, he was not the worse received by his former fellow-convicts and fellow-prisoners. They believed that he had entered the service of the state against his will, simply to avoid being sent to Brest or Toulon; he had the art to persuade them that if he were a spy by trade, he was still a thief by inclination. Moreover, at that epoch, the limit which separated the two professions was excessively narrow and undefined; many individuals migrated alternately from one to the other, or exercised both simultaneously. Almost all the members composing the Brigade of Surety, beginning with their chief, had resided in the hulks for a longer or shorter period. On the other hand, the thieves no longer formed, as of old, a society apart, in the midst of society. As soon as the attempt was made to drive them in a body out of Paris, they were not scrupulous about the means of procuring the favour of remaining there. Now, the surest way, evidently, was to keep on good terms with the police—to render it service—in a word, to denounce one another. Among professional thieves there were very few who did not regard it as a piece of good fortune to be consulted by the police, or employed on a job; almost all would have strained every sinew to give proofs of their zeal, in the hope of persuasion of its procuring, if not complete immunity, at least a certain degree of forbearance. The men who had the greatest reason to be afraid of the police were almost always the readiest to act at its bidding.

When other eminent functionaries retire from office, they ordinarily receive a vote of thanks, or an honorary title, or promotion in the Order of the Legion of Honour, or letters of nobility. Vidocq received, what he had long ardently longed for, letters of pardon. The cause of his retirement from the Brigade of Surety in the full vigour of life, remains obscure. He was careful to repeat that he sent in his resignation; but from the bitter and disdainful tone in which he always spoke of his successor, it was easy to see that his resignation was not absolutely voluntary. Like all great artists, Vidocq estimated himself at his full value; he seemed to think that no Préfet of Police could ever be so stupid as to think of dispensing with his assistance; consequently, at the slightest interference with his department, he was constantly threatening to send in his resignation. He played the trick so frequently that, one fine day, he was quite astonished to find his resignation accepted.

Probably the real cause of Vidocq's disgrace was his want of religious principles, or rather his constant refusal to make any religious profession. At a time when they gave three francs each to soldiers of the line, and five francs to those of the guard, for consenting to take the communion, the Préfet of Police, who was a warm partisan of the Jesuits, would not have

been sorry to see the Brigade of Surety, headed by its chief, likewise approach the Holy Table, keep the Jubilee, and follow the discipline of the missionaries. Several attempts at converting Vidocq completely failed. He had had too close a view of false devotees in prison—the worst class of prisoners—to wish to have any of them in his brigade; and he made a point, besides, of reserving the right of admitting and expelling whomsoever he pleased.

On leaving the police, he was to have had a pension for life, of twenty pounds a month. It was paid for six months only, and then suddenly stopped. At that period, everything was arbitrary in the administration of the police. To obtain an income, or rather, perhaps, to satisfy his inexhaustible activity, he set up a paper, card, and pasteboard manufactory, in which all the workpeople were liberated criminals of either sex. The police greatly encouraged the idea at the outset, and made large promises of pecuniary assistance. His first attempts, though beset with difficulties, were fairly successful. He demonstrated by experiment, still more forcibly than by reasoning, that all liberated criminals are not incorrigible, and that with a little perseverance about a third of their number may be reformed. But the police did not help him with a sou; the paper-merchants wanted to have the goods at half or quarter price, because they were the produce of criminal hands; the neighbours made an outcry against an establishment where so many persons of ill-repute were at work together. The speculation failed, with loss.

Other of his inventions were, a door that could not be broken open, and paper that could not be forged or imitated, for bank-notes and such-like purposes. But police matters were Vidocq's second nature; secret investigations, researches after people and things, were what he craved for as a necessity of existence. To gratify this, he set up his famous Bureau de Renseignements, or Information Office, which has since been imitated in London; the prospectus of it appeared in all the Parisian journals for June, 1833. Of this, we have only space to say that while it brought him in both credit and money, it eventually brought him into trouble, lawsuits, and difficulties with the authorities, which emptied his cash-box faster than it had been replenished.

To repair his losses, and still perhaps also to exercise his untiring energy, Vidocq, truly believing that his celebrity extended beyond the limits of France, resolved to exhibit himself in London. His first essay, during the season of 1845, succeeded so well, that he repeated it in 1846. For his theatre, he selected the Cosmorama in Regent-street. The performance, which was repeated several times in the course of the same day, was this: He addressed his audience, in French, in a short speech which was translated by an interpreter. He gave, after his own fashion, a summary of his adventurous life. He put on his galley-slave's dress and the irons with which he had been laden, including the double chain he had worn at Brest, as well as in the different prisons of Douai, Lille, and Paris.

He related the stratagems to which he had recourse, to take the most formidable criminals; and each time he put on the costume and made up his face as he had been obliged to do under the actual circumstances. Next, he displayed a sort of museum which might have passed for a wardrobe picked up at the Morgue—Papa-roine's hat, Lacenaire's pantaloons, Fieschi's frock-coat, and so forth. Whatever might be the authenticity of these relics, our countrymen were never tired of admiring them. Finally, by way of anti-climax, he exhibited a collection of artificial tropical fruits, and of pictures professing to be originals of the Italian and the Flemish schools, a few of which he sold at high prices, because they had been his property. Those which remained on his hands barely fetched, after his death, the value of the frames.

Vidocq was sought after, and his abilities appreciated, by persons above the vulgar. M. Charles Ledru, the eminent advocate, used not unfrequently to invite him to a restaurant, to meet a party of twenty, or five-and-twenty guests, who listened breathlessly to his exciting stories, and drank to the health of "the old lion."

"My defective education," he used to say, "left me unprovided with any check to curb so imperious a nature as mine." (At the age of fourteen, he killed a fencing-master in a duel.) "If, instead of rushing, like a fiery horse, into the abyss which I could not see opening wide before me, I had taken the place for which I was destined by the intelligence and the energy with which Providence had endowed me, I should have become as great as Kleber, Murat, and the rest of them. Both in head and in heart I was as good as they were; and I should have risen, as they rose. I lost the opportunity. I was born to figure in the noble scenes of war. When my eyes, at last, were open to reason, I beheld no other prospect before me than the prison, the dungeon, and the hulks. But if I have failed to attain the glory of military heroes, I retain the consolation of having always remained an honest man amidst the miasms of perversity and the atmosphere of crime. I have battled for the defence of order, in the name of justice, as soldiers battle for the defence of their country under the flag of their regiment. I wore no epanette, but I incurred as great dangers as they did, and like them I exposed my life every day."

During the troubled times of 1848, Vidocq was in direct communication with M. de Lamartine; and at the Fête of Fraternity, in the Champ-de-Mars, he saved the Provisional Government and the Constituent Assembly from being burnt alive. Lamartine retained so lively a remembrance of the service, that he is stated to have been *very near* visiting Vidocq on his death-bed.

Not only did Vidocq place himself at the disposal of the Provisional Government, but long after its fall he offered to propagate democratic ideas. What is curious is, that at the same time, by his own confession, he was vaunting the services he had rendered in another cause.

"Four or five months ago, I addressed to the Prince (Louis Napoleon) a letter in which I acquainted him with the poverty into which I have fallen, in consequence of an infamous abuse of confidence. In this letter, I reminded the President that, during his detention at Ham, I proposed, through M. Thérin's brother, to effect his escape, without conditions, disinterestedly. I reminded him, besides, that when he was a candidate for the national representation, and at the time of the vote for the presidency, I obtained more than eight thousand votes in Paris, and at least as many more in the banlieue—in Saint-Denis, Neuilly, Surènes, Puteaux, and other parishes—where I was continually present during the workpeople's meal times. I had not forgotten the kind manner with which he had the goodness to receive me in London, and to permit me to converse with him several times. I am vexed at the sight of a multitude of men who are aided by the minister and the President. What have they done to obtain those favours? Nothing! They only came to offer their interested devotion to the Prince when they felt certain he must rise to power, whilst I proposed to break his chains when he was still under lock and key."

It seems that Vidocq, for a time, had really put his faith in princes. All his life long, he had always manifested his enthusiasm in favour of new governments. When the Prince President returned from his progress in the south of France, Vidocq displayed from the window of his apartments in the Boulevard Beaumarchais, a magnificent transparency thus inscribed:

Louis Napoleon, thou Messiah of December 2, 1851, blessings on thee! Thou hast saved and regenerated France. Long live the Empire!

The sale of his furniture, which occupied two whole days, afforded evidence of his former easy circumstances, as well as of his decided taste for pictures and works of art. It is supposed, without being certain, that he had nothing left but an annuity of a hundred and twenty pounds. However, in his latter days, he freely taxed the generosity of the few friends left to him. He writes: "Wounded at heart and in the paw, the old lion cannot leave his den, where he groans, having no longer the strength to roar. Abandoned by all, he waits with courage and resignation for the gates of eternity to open. To oblige quickly, is to oblige twice. It seems that you have forgotten the proverb."

Vidocq's constitution was unusually robust and vigorous; every report of his numerous trials begins by describing his athletic stature and build.

"I believe," he would say, "I shall get as far as a hundred. At any rate, I have more than ten years before me." Paralysis proved that he was mistaken. He requested the

attendance of a priest, whom he had previously sent for as a confessor, to receive the last ceremonies of the Roman Church. The priest, on accosting the sick man, warned him of the disposition of mind necessary to receive the sacrament; and that, before all, it was needful to make absolute and complete avowal of all his faults.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," replied Vidocq; "when I tell you that I sent for you myself, you may be sure that I intend to be sincere."

Extreme unction and the viaticum were given. The moribund, suffocated, because he had restrained his deep emotion, sobbed aloud, and laid his hand on his heart to express what his lips were unable to utter. He wept pious tears, and with an effort said, "This is the happiest day of my life. It is too much happiness for Vidocq."

Shortly before receiving the Holy Communion, the priest had given him a cross to kiss, which was made of olive-kernels from the Mount of Olives and blessed by the Pope, and a rosary also blessed by the Pope, and which he held twisted round his arm. He became calm as he respectfully gazed at these relics, and at intervals made a declaration, partly repentant, and partly justifying his past life.

His funeral was followed by fifty male and female paupers, who each received three francs. Besides these paid mourners, there were not ten people in the church. Amongst those few, a young person in tears was observed.

As soon as he was dead, in addition to other claimants of the inheritance, there came an actress of the Boulevard, and two, three, five, ten, women of doubtful reputation, each armed with a will in proper form; but all anterior to another that was produced by the persons with whom he lodged.

When the seals on his property were broken, the Government intervened, and removed from Vidocq's papers all such as might have any connexion with the functions he had formerly fulfilled. The same thing happened after the deaths of Cambacérès and Talleyrand.

On Saturday, the 4th of August, will appear the
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